

The Unscriptural Man-Made Traditions In The Church In The Last Days

(By Alister Hamilton, Bill Turner And Others)

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The King James Version follows the vast majority of Greek texts in the order of about 1,000 to 10, and it is also confirmed by the ancient manuscripts in other languages, like the Gothic and Peshitta. It is in my opinion still the most accurate translation from the original Scriptures, and is my preferred version, and other translations quoted in this study, are tested against the King James Version. The Hebrew and Greek texts are taken from The Interlinear Bible.

Foreword

With the last seven years of this age (the Age of Grace) about to start, and hence the Great Tribulation beginning immediately after the first three and a half years into the seven, as I look at **ALL** the denominational Churches, I am greatly amazed and deeply sorrowed at the great wilful blindness and ignorance of the devastation about to break upon the whole world, when God lets this time bomb explode in the world. Dan 9v24-27 (esp. v27), 12v1, Matt 24v15-21, 2Thess 2v1-12 (esp. v7), Rev 12v7-12, 13v5.

The Lord Jesus gave Bill Turner a vision of the denominational Churches in the latter part of his prophetic teaching ministry, which was that **everybody** in the denominational Churches (in The Stoke on Trent area) had their heads in the sand, with zzzz's coming from them, in other words everybody was asleep to the terrible events of the last days immediately preceding the Lord's Second Coming.

A few years ago, in my prayer time, I was thinking about this vision that the Lord Jesus had given Bill, and the Lord said to me, that now, **everybody** in the **every** denominational Church was not just asleep, but in a comatose state!

So, in this study I desire to try and set forth some possible reasons and remedies for this.

Alister Hamilton, 21st December 2024

Introduction

When the pre-incarnate Christ, the Lord Jesus, gave The Law to Moses on Mount Sinai (1491 BC), He gave him the following command:

“And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.” Exodus 25v40.

Moses was very diligent to obey this command of the Lord, and the result was, when The Tabernacle was finished being made and erected, the Glory of God filled it, and Moses was not able to enter it, because the Glory was so great. Exodus 40v33-35.

By the time the Lord Jesus started His ministry in 26-27 AD, the Temple that was in Jerusalem, which had been built by Herod the Great, had never known the Shekhinah Glory of God, indeed, the Lord Jesus said “Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.” Mark 11v17, Isaiah 56v7. “Thieves” would better be translated as “robbers,” which is translated from the Greek word, “leistes” (Strong’s NT:3027), and means a brigand, one who plunders openly and by violence. The religious leaders in The Temple were making vast amounts of money by making the worshippers change their Roman money into the Jewish coin (via the moneychangers) to pay the Temple tax and buy the sacrifices to present to the Lord at exorbitant rates. The moneychangers and sellers of the sacrifices were simply permitted to trade in the “court of the Gentiles,” the vast profits going into the pockets of the Temple leadership.

There was then the problem of the Mishnah and the Gemarah: the Mishnah is the first written collection of the Jewish oral traditions that are known as the Oral Torah. The Gemarah was a component of the Talmud, comprising a collection of rabbinical analyses and commentaries on the Mishnah and presented in 63 books. These writings (which were simply numerous extra unscriptural laws) were ALL man-made and by the Lord’s time upon earth were given greater authority than the Scriptures, by the Scribes and Pharisees; hence the Lord Jesus charged them so:

“Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” Matt 15v6-9.

The Apostles, having sat in their local synagogues, week after week, for years, listening to the preaching of unscriptural man-made traditions were greatly hindered by this, to the receiving and understanding the Truth that the Lord Jesus was (trying) to impart to them. Matt 16v21-23, Luke 24v25, John 16v12, 1Peter 1v18.

And so, because of this, the Lord Jesus sternly warned the Apostles and His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians. Matt 16v6, Mark 8v5, 12v38, Luke 11v52.

Such was the effect of these unscriptural man-made traditions on their minds and spirits, that even after Our Lord’s 40 days post-resurrection ministry to them, that when He was about to depart from them into Heaven He gave them the command to wait for the promise of the Father:

“Which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, **Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?**” Acts 1v4-6.

They still had not perceived the Truth about the New Covenant (even after the Lord’s post-resurrection ministry to them), but their spirits and minds were bound by a nationalistic spirit. All Israel (except old Simeon, Luke 2v25-35), and especially the religious leaders had missed the Truth about the Lord’s first coming, as The Lamb of God, Who would make atonement for sin, and bring in the New Covenant, they replaced the Lord’s first coming, with His second coming, a Messiah Who would come and throw off the yoke of the Romans, and restore the Kingdom to Israel. Even John Baptist, Christ’s herald, who the Lord said that among those born of woman had not arisen one greater than he, also being the greatest prophet above all that had preceded him, missed Our Lord’s first Coming. He threw out the revelation that Christ was the Lamb of God given to him, and held onto the unscriptural man-made traditions that his father had taught him, and substituted Christ’s First Coming for His Second, that He would come

in glory, throw of the Roman yoke and restore the kingdom to Israel. Isaiah chapter 53, Daniel 9v24-27, Matt 11v2,3,10,11, Luke 7v28, John 1v29,36, Acts 1v6.

There was also the evil seed that the Devil had put into the Apostles' hearts and minds that the Messiah would not suffer, and so even with the Lord Jesus with them, giving them continuous Truth, they flatly refused to believe that He had to die, and would be raised on the third day. Luke 18v31-34.

And so, as it was in Our Lord's day, so it is at the end of this age, the Church, the Body of Christ, is filled with many unscriptural man-made traditions, which has totally blinded believers heart's, minds and spirits to the Truth of Our Lord's Second Coming, and bound them in chains of unbelief in a dark prison cell. The Devil has also put an evil seed into the Church that it will not suffer during the Great Tribulation, but will be raptured immediately before the Great Tribulation begins. The result of those Christians believing this destructive heresy will be backsliding and certain apostasy as shown in the Faithful and Evil Servants and Ten Virgins passages of Scripture. Matt 24v45-25v13.

Chapter I

With the giving of The Law on Mount Sinai, the Lord gave explicit instructions on how His Tabernacle was to be built and how the sacrifices and worship should be carried out before Him, so when the Lord Jesus started His ministry upon earth, He also gave directions and teaching on Church government, practices and organisation for His Body, the Church, upon earth, and continued that teaching through His Apostles and Prophets being inspired and written down through them as Scripture as Our Great High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek. Eph 2v20, 2Tim 3v16, Heb 5v5,6.

All this teaching is not given in one place in Scripture, but is to be found by diligently studying **ALL** the Scriptures for any given subject; Christians following the example of the Bereans who:

"Were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Acts 17v10.

We all tend to be imprisoned by the traditions of the Christians that we fellowship with without even realising it, and these traditions become part of our personality, thinking and way of life. Young Christians usually accept what they are taught by older Christians without really thinking through the doctrines that they have been taught, and do not seriously examine their beliefs, practices, and traditions in the light of the Scriptures. They say, just as I did, "My Christian leaders are godly men of long experience, they must be right; I'll accept what they say." Then as we grow in knowledge of God and His Word, we begin to realise that some, or even many, of the traditions that we have accepted, have little or no Scriptural basis. Most people, unfortunately, still doggedly, and even wilfully, cling to many traditions and doctrines of men that make void the Word of God. Matt 15v1-9, Mark 7v1-13, N.B. v13. "Many things like this you are constantly doing."

People have found it almost impossible to escape from the mighty prisons and practices of tradition into the fullness and liberty of God's Word. It is all the more difficult if one has become part of an organisation that has preached these traditions for many years; there are few who are willing to humble themselves and admit that they were wrong. It took a vision of Christ to deliver Paul from his sincerely held man-made traditions.

This is why a full study of New Testament Church organisation, not only covers the structure and offices of the New Testament Church, but also the practices of the early Church at Jerusalem, in prayer, worship, evangelism, the "agape" love between the members, and the Divine manifestations of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit to spiritually hungry disciples. When the early Church believed God's word and followed His directions, they had revival. If we follow the divinely ordained spiritual practices of the early Church, we shall also have revival. If we replace God's order with the traditions of men, we shall experience spiritual barrenness. Is God's Word of none-effect? Are his promises fruitless? Of course not! If we fulfil his conditions, He will fulfil His Word and promises; for it is impossible for God to lie, He cannot deny Himself. 2Tim 2v13, Heb 6v12-20, N. B. v12,18.

The Scriptures reveal that God used heathen kings to fulfil His will at times, and a Christ-rejecting high priest to prophesy, but they were certainly not the highest expressions of God's will, or ideal channels of His power and purposes; God used them in spite of their wickedness, not because of their righteousness. Isaiah 10v5-27, John 11v47-53. It is not a question of how far we can get away from God's pattern before God gives us up, we must ask ourselves, "Which pattern of Church organisation that God can work through best? What is the ideal channel of his power and will? The answer must be, "God's original pattern of Church organisation."

Powerful ministry gifts, and a truly Spirit-led, "agape" love-dominated, body ministry in local churches, is the perfect channel of God's life and power. Churches that follow this New Testament pattern are mighty in evangelism, and blessed in fellowship and spiritual growth.

Men have replaced the wonderful liberty, power, and love of a Christ-directed Church, by the cast iron prisons of their own traditions, constitutions and organisations. The Church organisation that Christ initiated is quite easy to understand and imitate, those who say otherwise, only do so because they prefer their own traditions to God's order. If you shut God out of His Church with man-made structures and traditions you can't expect revival. Stephen said these man-made structures and traditions **ALWAYS** resist the Holy Spirit and hinder revival. Acts 7v51-53. Satan and carnality have inspired God-resisting traditions. The further churches have got away from the source of the river of divine truth, the more polluted those waters have become with man-made and Satan-inspired false traditions. Christ and his early church carefully distinguished between tradition that arose from man's perversion of God's truth, and the tradition that is God's truth revealed in the Scriptures, and we must do the same. Col 2v8, Gal 1v14.

In 1Peter 1v18,19, Peter informs us that unscriptural traditions, whether they be Jewish or Gentile traditions, are futile and fruitless. The Greek word for "handed down from your fathers," is "patroparadotos," and it only occurs here in the New Testament, and could apply equally to the traditions handed down from Jews, Gentiles, or Christians. We really need to watch the traditions handed down to us by our natural and spiritual fathers, it is so easy to get into traditional ruts and routines which are not of God, and from which we cannot escape, and which resist the workings of the Holy Spirit. There is often a clear choice between our church traditions, routines and organisations, and revival. We will not experience revival if our churches are riddled with men's traditions, and we do not recognise the leadership of the Holy Spirit and the Lordship of Christ, and unless God ministers through the local church and the ministries of the Church as a body.

The Church was planned and ordained by God, not man, Christ gave us the full and permanent teaching on Church organisation.

Not only did the Church replace God's organisation, government and practices with unscriptural man-made traditions, but also many key doctrines were also wilfully changed, and this all being inspired and done by none other than the Devil, who is the father of lies. John 8v44.

The Scriptures warn us repeatedly that many false christs, false prophets and false teachers will arise in the Church in these last days, and that we should take great care not to be deceived by them, even when they come and do great lying signs, wonders and miracles, which will be done by evil satanic and demonic power. We are to test **ALL** things (against the Scriptures) and hold fast to that which is good. Matt 7v15-23, 24v4,5,11,24, 1Thess 5v20,21, 2Thess 2v1-12, 1Tim 4v1-3, 2Tim 3v1-9, 2Peter 2v1-22, 1John 4v1-6, 2John v7, Jude v3,4, Rev 13 (all).

The Church today, which is the Body of Christ, bears little if any resemblance to the early Church, for example the following changes have occurred:

1) Paul's doctrine of "dead sin in the flesh" has been changed to that of "original sin" and "born in sin theories."

(Please see Appendix I & II: Foundation Truths (Chapter I) & The Disastrous Effects Of Augustine's Doctrine Of 'Original Sin')

2) Baptism in water (believer's baptism) was replaced by "infant baptism."

3) Baptism in the Spirit (with the evidence of speaking in tongues) which is set forth in the Scriptures as taking place **after** the "new birth" was then replaced by the "new birth" and receiving the Holy Spirit as taking place at the same time, with the gift of speaking in tongues and all the other eight spiritual gifts being not needed and irrelevant as the Church had the canon of Scripture.

4) The ministry of "laying on of hands" for healing of the body and other blessings given by God, the Holy Spirit, was deemed as having been withdrawn from the Body of Christ and no longer needed as healings in the Name of Jesus only took place in the first century to establish the Gospel.

The above four doctrines are included in the first five doctrines of the "first principles of the oracles of God" as listed in Heb 6v1,2, which were taught by the apostles, prophets and pastors of the early Church to "babes in Christ," and are stated to be the "milk" that new converts need to be given that they, once having been understood, could then go onto perfection to partake of "the meat," i.e., learning and participating as a priest, in the heavenly places, in the Melchizedek Priesthood, under the leadership of our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus. Eph 2v6, Heb 5v10-6v2, 1Peter 2v1-3.

Few Christians today know these “foundation truths” and indeed when looked at, the vast majority of Christians look upon them as “the meat” and not “the milk” and so think that studying them is beyond them, and for their pastors and Church leaders to know, which few do.

The fact is that today in every denominational church, Christians hardly progress pass the “new birth” state, and remain “babes in Christ” for decades, being slowly starved to spiritual death by half truths and downright lies fed to them from the pulpit by their unspiritual pastors and leaders who hinder revival by their unscriptural man-made traditions!

(Please see Appendix I: Foundation Truths)

Chapter II

Today’s formal denominational services bears absolutely no likeness to that of the early Church, body ministry has been replaced by one man ministries, where the pastor controls everything that happens; plurality of elders (overseers, pastors and teachers, four names gives to the one ministry) has been replaced by one person, a minister or pastor. The early Church linked the Lord’s Supper and Christian fellowship with social fellowship. Acts 2v46. In many churches today Christians gather for the Lord’s Supper, but there is little communion or fellowship of the saints.

Instead of God, the Holy Spirit, ministering through individual believers in the informal fellowship meetings to meet the needs of other believers (body ministry), as He sees fit, believers today sit passively in a service, not participating at all, but simply listening to a boring sermon which is totally irrelevant to the hearers’ needs and problems and spiritually lifeless, with absolutely little or no Presence and Power of God to meet the needs of sick, burdened and needy Christians and individuals. Today’s believers rely totally on the minister to do everything, and so keeps them in perpetual spiritual infancy. Services are endured, rather than enjoyed, and this has been the case for centuries!

The greater ministries in the Church, apostles and prophets in the eyes of the denominations are completely irrelevant, and (supposedly) do not exist today, but were only for the first century for the establishment of the Gospel, and were withdrawn as they were not needed due to having the Scripture canon, and Christianity becoming the state religion of the Roman Empire when Constantine (allegedly) became a Christian in 312 AD, and with his issue of the Edict of Toleration (Milan) in 313 AD, which gave power, wealth and influence to the Christian Church, which ensured that the revival, which the Church had enjoyed since the days that the Lord Jesus preached the Gospel and healed the sick completely ceased!

It has been reported that by 200 AD one in five of the Roman Empire were Christian, the population of which was one hundred and twenty five million, there was no village in the Empire where the Name of the Lord Jesus was not called upon. This was all achieved by the Power and Presence of the Living God, who worked through and with the ministries and individual believers for the effective spread of the Gospel. The Church was not allowed to build any buildings and were completely bereft of any wealth, power or worldly influence, and indeed often suffered persecution and death for loving the Lord Jesus and calling upon His Name, but enjoyed continuous revival right up until the terrible time when the Edict of Toleration (Milan) was decreed, after which it only had a form of godliness and no power. Mark 16v15-20, 1Cor 3v9, 2Tim 3v5.

Over the coming centuries a great darkness ascended upon the Church, with brief periods of revival, the participants of which were viciously persecuted and martyred by the Roman Catholic Church and later on by the established Protestant Church. Once the revival had been taken over by men and then firmly under the control of the Devil, the Power and Presence of the Living God disappeared from it, and it became a dead formal denomination with a form of godliness, denying its power!

And so today, I could go to just about any denominational or independent church service in N Ireland where I live, and be confronted with a dead powerless form of Christian worship!

(Please see Appendix III & IV: The Informal Fellowship Meeting & The Old Wineskins And Old Wine Of The Denominational Churches)

Chapter III

As soon as Constantine issued the Edict of Toleration (Milan) in 313 AD, and the Church was given great wealth, power and influence, the Power and Presence of the Living God vanished from it (and so did His spiritual gifts),

being replaced by a dead form. And when the Power and Presence went from the Church, the greater ministries, that of apostle and prophet also disappeared.

It is also a historical fact that giving in the early Church was on a voluntary basis and that early Christians did not tithe, and that there was no tithing in the Church for several centuries, and that some parts of the Church never tithed. When we compare the practice and teaching on giving in the early Church, with the practice and teaching on giving today, we see a great difference in both the amount of requests for money, and the purposes for which it is requested. This great divergence of practice comes from either a failure to realise, or a failure to obey, the New Testament principles of giving. Our Lord's apostolic band did not appeal for money for their mission, or for themselves, there were no collections from their congregations, indeed, they carried a bag of money, which they gave to the needy poor. The vast majority of finances in the early Church were given in response to appeals for the poor, which is certainly not true in nearly all churches today. The first controversy in the early Church was over finances, and we see what God thinks of those who deal deceitfully with money. In Acts 5v1-11 we see Ananias and his wife Sapphira executed by the power of God, through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, by Peter. Of the seven Churches in Rev chapters 2 & 3, only two escape rebuke from Our Lord, four of the other five, the Lord had something good to say about individuals or groups within them, however, one Church, that of Laodicea, the Lord Jesus could find nothing good to say about anyone in it. The Laodiceans blindly said "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," but the Lord rightly describes them as "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked!" Rev 3v14-22 (esp. v17). This church at Laodicea had been tended by Epaphras, a most sacrificial and prayerful servant of God, but the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches, and other worldly desires, had dominated their lives and choked the Word of God. Matt 13v22, Mark 4v19, Luke 8v11-15. The Lord Jesus warns us not to be taken up and seeking after money and wealth in the last days, and especially not during the Great Tribulation. Luke 21v34, James 5v1-3. Church History and the Laodiceans prove that **NOTHING** can corrupt a person's character and spiritual life as quickly as wealth and affluence. Mark 4v19. All the Laodiceans actually possessed was a blind self-conceit and complacency; the fire, enthusiasm and love that Christ expects were gone, they had got to the place where they thought that their godliness was proved by material gain. 1Tim 6v5,6, compare Phil 1v21, 3v7, 2Cor 8v9, Col 1v7, 4v12.

Jesus corrects us because He loves us, and His love flowed out to this conceited, self-satisfied and disobedient church at Laodicea. He would not let them continue on the path to spiritual destruction, if He could stop it. Jesus commands them to repent, and replace their lukewarm service by zeal. Jesus reproves and chastens those who He loves; if we will not listen to His wise counsel we must be taught to do so by a chastening that must of necessity be painful. Heb 12v1-17, John 3v20, 16v8, Job 5v17, Prov 3v12.

The Lord uses some very strong words in the Scriptures to show us the enormous privileges of those who overcome and the fearful loss of the slothful, timid and unbelieving. Matt 25v14-30, Heb 3v6-19, 6v1-20.

Jesus makes the most tremendous efforts to save us from such a dreadful fate, He stands and knocks at the door of the heart, urgently, plainly and persistently, with great condescension, forbearance and importunity, and for those who hear there is complete restoration, they sup with God. Luke 12v36,37, John 10v4,27, 14v23.

They also have the glorious prospect of reigning with Christ, a glorious promise that shows how the grace of God can restore the backslider. Jesus says that they could still overcome and reign with Him.

Jesus was standing and knocking, not at the hearts of sinners, but at the hearts of the saints. How awful! Jesus was shut out of the lives that He had saved. They thanked Him for His love, but would not listen to His plans, His guidance, or His desire to use them to bless a needy world. This happens today in very many modern Laodicean churches. Jesus still knocks upon the closed door of the heart of lukewarm Christians, by the Scriptures, by the Holy Spirit, by the example of spiritual Christians, and sometimes by painful means such as sickness, bereavement and persecution. 1Cor 11v27-32, 2Kings 10v31,32, 2Chron 16v7-12 with 2Chron 15v1-8 and 1Kings 15v1-15.

John Wesley gives us, on page 204 of volume 2 of his works, the reason why spiritual gifts were not common in Church history after about 400 AD "The grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn, was not only that faith and holiness were well nigh lost, but that dry, formal, orthodox men, began to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves and decry them all as madness or imposture."

Wesley also writes in his sermon "The More Excellent Way."

"It does not appear that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were common in the Church for more than two or three centuries. We seldom hear of them after the fatal period when the Emperor Constantine called himself a Christian; and, from a vain imagination of promoting the Christian cause thereby, heaped riches and power and honour upon the Christians in general, but in particular upon the Christian Clergy. From this time they almost totally ceased; very few instances of the kind were found. The cause of this was not, as has been vulgarly supposed, "Because there was no more occasion for them, because all the world had become Christians." This is a miserable

mistake...The real cause was 'the love of many,' almost of all Christians, so called, was 'waxed cold.' The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ than the other Heathens; The Son of Man when He came to examine His Church, could hardly 'find faith upon the earth.' This was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian Church; because the Christians were turned Heathens again, and had only a dead form left."

However, when Christians got right with the Lord Jesus and started to earnestly seek Him in prevailing prayer, He would come and visit them with His Power and Presence. Probably history's greatest revival to date, took place in the early years of the Twentieth Century, including the Welsh Revival, the Asuza Street Revival, the Korean Pentecost, the Manchurian Revival, and the Mizo outpouring. The Church sat in darkness for a long age, until what can be termed The Pre-Reformation European Revivals—1300-1500. After a thousand years of spiritual darkness (the Dark Ages) came the stories of God beginning to work in unusual ways bringing revival to a remnant who longed to experience His Presence. These revivals ushered in the world-changing Protestant Reformation movements such as England's Lollard Revival, the Burning of John Hus at the stake, and Savonarola's Florence Revival in Italy. Over the coming centuries, thirsting, longing Christians would reach out to the Lord for His Power and Presence and the Lord did not disappoint, and with His Power and Presence, He would manifest Himself through the gifts of the Spirit, with also the greater ministries of apostle and prophet being restored to the Body of Christ.

We read in Acts 2v17-21,38,39:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved...Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

This passage of Scripture is taken from the OT book of Joel 2v28-32, and (with Eph 4v7-16) it teaches that spiritual ministries and spiritual gifts are placed in the Body of Christ by the Lord Jesus throughout the whole of the age of Grace, beginning with the "early rains" on the Day of Pentecost and ending with the "latter rains" in "the last days." The "latter rains" (in the natural sense) were far greater than the "early rains," the "latter" occurred just before harvest time, to swell the ear of the grains to bring it to maturity. And so, the last great worldwide revival that is about to take place, will be far greater than the first outpouring on the Day of Pentecost, and indeed will be the greatest revival the world will have ever known and experienced. Rev 7v9,10,14, 11v3-6.

(Please see Appendices V & VI: The New Testament Ministries, Their Gifts And Work & The Nine Gifts Of The Holy Spirit)

Chapter IV

The Scriptures put great emphasis upon the Second Coming of Christ. It has been said, "There is more Scriptural authority for Christ's second coming than for all the other doctrines of the Bible put together." This statement soundly condemns the lack of interest shown by far too many of God's people today towards this vital subject. The silence of most preachers on the theme of this blessed hope of the Church gives cause for great alarm, particularly when the signs of the times indicate that the coming of Christ is near. What we believe regarding this subject will matter a great deal in the not so distant future. The lack of interest in Christ's second coming is a sure sign of a loss of first love for Jesus, and a spiritual apathy and lethargy among the people of God. Someone who noted the longing for Christ's coming and the zeal for this truth in the first part of Church history, wrote, "It would have been deemed a kind of apostasy not to have sighed after the day of the Lord." Those who have neglected the subject of our Lord's second coming should repent and meditate afresh upon this blessed hope that purifies. 1John 3v3.

God warns us that judgement will fall upon those who misinterpret the book of Revelation and add to, or take away, its prophecies. Rev 22v18,19. An added secret rapture means an added judgement upon those who teach it. The subject of prophecy demands a teachable spirit, diligent study and trembling at the Word of God. 1Tim 4v14-16, 2Tim 2v15, Isaiah 66v2.

In 1Tim 1v19,20, we read that Paul delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme. We learn from 2Tim 2v16-18, that Paul did this because they had overthrown the faith of some Christians, by saying that the resurrection and the second coming of Christ had already taken place. Paul said their wrong doctrine ate like a canker and gangrene, and they died for their dangerous heresy, executed by the operation

of God's judgement gifts through Paul; just as Peter had executed Ananias and Sapphira with those same gifts. Acts 5v1-11. Note in Acts 5v11, how "great fear fell upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things." The deaths of Hymenaeus, Philetus, and Alexander, show how serious and dangerous it is to misinterpret prophecy!

In Matt 24v48-51, Jesus warns us that if Christians believe that His second coming and the rapture take place before the great tribulation; then, when it does not happen, their faith will be overthrown, and they will say, "My Lord delays His coming;" and as a result go and live bad lives. Will the Lord Jesus feel any more tolerant of such faith destroying teachers and teaching, than He did of Hymenaeus and his false doctrine? Our Lord reveals the striking fact that these people will blame God for a delay, rather than examine and question their own doctrine. We need to be very careful what we teach about our Lord's second coming.

Matt 25v1-13 is simply carrying on from Matt 24, especially from the parable of the faithful and wise servant and the evil servant in Matt 24v45-51.

(Please see Appendix VII, VIII, IX, X & XI: God's Answers For The Last Days, Oil For Our Lamps!, Concerning The Promised Return Of The Lord Jesus (By W F P Burton), Words of encouragement from the Lord Jesus for the Church & The Use Of The Gift Of Tongues During The Last Seven Years Of This Age)

Conclusion

The secret pre-tribulation advent and rapture heresy is just one of many such erroneous doctrines in the Church, but believing it as we come into the fast approaching dark evil days of the Great Tribulation, will all but guarantee that the individual will **NOT** come through it with an overcoming faith, but will backslide and go into apostasy! Matt 24v45-25v13, 2Peter 1v19-21.

With Daniel's 70th prophetic week about to start, and so, the Great Tribulation three and a half years later, the Christians in the denominational Churches have wilfully closed their eyes, ears, minds and spirits to the Truth from the last day prophetic Scriptures, signs in the world and what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Body of Christ. Why is the false teaching on a pre-tribulation advent and rapture so readily accepted by Christians? Paul tells us in 2Tim 4v3,4, that it is because Christians desire to have their ears tickled with myths, fables, and lies rather than accept the truth.

"For there is going to come a time when people won't listen to the truth but will go around looking for teachers who will tell them just what they want to hear. They won't listen to what the Bible says but will blithely follow their own misguided ideas." [TLB]

God says that it is an abomination when prophets and preachers cry peace, when there is no peace, and warns them that they will come under Divine judgement for their false prophecies and bad lives. Jer 6v14,15, 27v6-28v17. God can do the same today with false teachers and false prophets who teach lies about the second coming of Jesus Christ our Lord, even as He executed Hymenaeus, Alexander and Philetus by divine power through Paul for their false teaching on the Second Coming of Christ, causing the faith of some Christians to be overthrown. 1Tim 1v19,20, 2Tim 2v16-18.

In Rev 22v18-20, the Lord Jesus gives this solemn warning:

"I [personally solemnly] warn everyone who listens to the statements of the prophecy [the predictions and the consolations and admonitions pertaining to them] in this book: If anyone shall add anything to them, God will add and lay upon him the plagues (the afflictions and the calamities) that are recorded and described in this book. And if anyone cancels or takes away from the statements of the book of this prophecy [these predictions relating to Christ's kingdom and its speedy triumph, together with the consolations and admonitions or warnings pertaining to them], God will cancel and take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the city of holiness (purity and hallowedness), which are described and promised in this book. He Who gives this warning and affirms and testifies to these things says, Yes (it is true). [Surely] I am coming quickly (swiftly, speedily). Amen (so let it be)! Yes, come, Lord Jesus!" [AMP]

In Matt 24v45-25v13, the Lord Jesus clearly demonstrates the effect of believing the error of a secret pre-tribulation advent and rapture, which will be backsliding and apostasy!

HOWEVER, if the Christian is open to receiving Truth, and looks to The One Who will enable them to come through the Great Tribulation with an overcoming faith (Rev 12v6,11,14), they will see that He has **ALL** the answers (and infinitely more) for every need in every circumstance that any individual Christian will ever experience in the Great Tribulation, for Our Dear Lord Jesus in none other than "EHYEH ASHER EHYEH," "I AM THAT I AM." Exodus 3v14,15, John 8v58.

The sacred name of "Yahweh," or "Jehovah," depending on which form you prefer to use, comes from the Hebrew verb "to be," as Exodus 3v14,15, states, "And God said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM, (Hebrew, EHYEH ASHER EHYEH), and He said, You shall say to the Israelites I AM has sent me to you. This is my name for ever, and by this name I am to be remembered to all generations." Hebrew scholars have stated that "EHYEH ASHER EHYEH" means, "I AM WHO I AM, AND WHAT I AM: AND I WILL BE, WHAT I WILL BE." Jewish Rabbis say that the name "EHYEH ASHER EHYEH and its context means, "I will be with you ALL the time, in ALL situations." However, I think it means more, "I will be with you, at all times, and in all situations, to be what I am to you." God comes to make ALL His abilities and love available to us in ALL our circumstances and needs. The name of "Jehovah" or "Yahweh," whichever way you prefer to pronounce it, encapsulates the meaning of the great name of God, "EHYEH ASHER EHYEH," "I AM THAT I AM," and manifests the eternal availability, of God's love and power. The name of Jesus has been given to us, and when we call on His name, He comes to give us what we need. Phil 4v19, Heb 13v5,8

The covenant Names of Yahweh reveal the inner nature of God, for in Exodus 33v18,19, when Moses asked to see the glory of God, God answered, "I will make ALL MY GOODNESS pass before you, and **I WILL PROCLAIM THE NAME OF THE LORD before you.** From Exodus 34v5-8, we see the clear link between the name and the mercy, grace, longsuffering and abundant goodness and truth of God. **The name reveals the inner nature of God, and invocation of the Divine Name makes all the inner glorious being and abilities of God available to us.**

Putting the name of God on people (and nations) in blessing and protection truly works. Num 6v22-27. God commanded Aaron to use the sacred Name to bless and protect the Israelites. This blessing placed a hedge of protective Divine thorns about the people of God, the same kind of hedge that protected Job; Job 1v9,10; it turned God's face towards them in blessing. By Aaron invoking His Name upon the people of Israel every day, God met ALL the needs of ALL Israel in the wilderness for forty years, without any help from the surrounding nations. Israel numbered continuously at least two and a half million people during that period of forty years in the wilderness, and what God did for Israel (in the Wilderness), He delights to do for us! Deut 8v4, Neh 9v19-21, Psalm 105v39-41, 2Cor 1v20.

Jesus manifested the sacred Name to His disciples, and kept them in the Name, and declared the Name to them, that Divine love might become part of their beings. John 17v6,12,26. All the people of Israel heard and could use that Divine Name, and so should EVERY Christian!

At this present time so much of the Church, the Body of Christ, has no (prophetic) vision or knowledge of God, and hence are fulfilling what is written in Prov 29v18:

"Where there is no vision, the people perish..."

And:

Hosea 4v6: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..."

Let us heed the injunction of Paul to the Romans:

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Rom 13v11-14 with 2Peter 1v3-11.

(See Appendix XI: Words of encouragement from the Lord Jesus for the Church)

Yahweh Shalom

Appendix I: Foundation Truths

A Text Book for Young Christians

By C L Parker

Tutor Hampstead Bible School, Kenley, Surrey

(Formerly Chaplain, Fellow, and Tutor of University College, Oxford)

To my students, who by patient listening and unceasing questioning, have through the years, forced upon me hours of strenuous Bible study, this booklet, to which they have contributed so much, is affectionately dedicated.

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Introduction

Repentance From Dead Works

Faith Towards God

Baptism In Water

Baptism In The Spirit

The Laying On Of Hands

The Resurrection Of The Dead

Eternal Judgement

The Cross Of The Lord

The Foundation of Repentance from Dead Works, and of Faith towards God, of the Doctrine of Baptisms, and of Laying on of Hands, of Resurrection of the Dead, and of Eternal Judgment. Heb 6v1,2.

Foreword

It is a pleasure to commend to the thinking student this first edition of a book by a painstaking scholar and theologian upon the intriguing subject, which he has called "Foundation Truths."

My mind was made up before first reading the script that I would not agree with the writer simply because he was a friend of mine. It is a happy mood to be in when one can disagree reasonably. That was how I first read this textbook.

I found, however, that after reading a few pages, this care-free mood was not guaranteed any permanence: for the writer's logic, careful application of abundant scripture references and sincere appeal to his readers to prove to their own satisfaction his interpretations of fundamental truth, made it very difficult for me to disagree. This I presume was just where he wanted me—thinking—thinking for myself.

This is a textbook for the careful reader: and its subject matter is worthy of painstaking study. The doctrines considered are vital and essential to an understanding of both God and man, sin and salvation, death and life, heaven and hell.

The chapter on Eternal Punishment is very provocative and should be studied prayerfully with an open Bible at hand. This subject is as much for the heart as for the intellect. One's heart is warmed as it is plainly shown that God is not a Being with a split personality, as many must have thought Him when considering His judgments: a loving God to His own people, but fearful in hatred and revenge upon a disobedient host of unbelievers!

God is love: and at no time nor in any circumstances does He change: for in His unchanging love and mercy He provides a secure Keeping Place for the unbelievers and thus preserves the eternal peace of His own beloved people. This is Hell—God's madhouse, for the ultimately irreconcilable.

If this brief foreword were for purposes of comment, then it would be as long as the book. It is not. It is a privilege granted me to commend this book to all students of God's Word and to those who love His appearing. **George Newsholme. (An outstanding Pastor, and former Principal of the Hampstead Bible School.)**

Foreword

It gives me great satisfaction to recommend this third edition of Foundation Truths by one of the Lord's most esteemed servants.

The value of these thought-provoking studies can never be truly estimated in mere words. I am most grateful to Lord for allowing me the privilege of hearing them expounded by the writer himself in the lecture hall of the Hampstead Bible College; there was never a dull moment!

Ever since Foundation Truths have been committed to print I have never been without a copy, and it has been my joyful practice to pass them on to others in the hope that they will be as enriched by them as I have been.

Clyde Young. Assemblies of God Minister, Sunderland

About The Author

A summary of the life of C. L. Parker by his son, John Parker

Cuthbert Layland Parker was born in 1887, gained 1st Class Honours at St. John's College, Oxford in 1908 in the Classics (Latin and Greek), was ordained priest in 1912 and became a Tutor at University College, Oxford, from 1912-1918. He also gained a blue and two half blues while at St. John's in Rugby, Swimming and Athletics respectively.

Mr Parker's varied and unusual career in the ministry meant that at one time he was General Secretary of Assemblies of God and at another was Vicar of St. James, Clerkenwell, London and Chaplain to the Royal Free Hospital when it was on Grays Inn Road.

It was during his first curacy at St. Luke, Redcliffe Square, that an old lady prayed for him to be saved - it must have been a rather well to do church, more traditional than evangelical. Mr Parker used to tell how, at this time, he was sitting in the garden, smoking a pipe and reading his Greek New Testament, when the Holy Spirit illuminated the Word, and he cried out 'By gad, the Bible's true!' He then went into the pulpit and told the people he had been telling them lies thus far - and now would tell them the truth!

In 1917, Mr Parker married Phyllis Harcourt Kent at St. James, Clerkenwell, of which at that time his father was vicar and of which he would become vicar 20 years later. It was during this latter period that the church experienced an outpouring of the Spirit, which must have made it one of the earliest charismatic churches of the 20th century.

Returning to 1917, Mr Parker, and his wife Phyllis, quickly absorbed and entered into the fundamental truths of New Testament Christianity, such as Justification by Faith, Divine Healing, the Second Coming, etc. It was not long before he commenced his teaching ministry at various Bible Colleges (including the Bible League College and the Assemblies of God Bible College in Surrey), and also as a Convention Speaker all round the country.

His style of teaching was to allow his students to ask questions as the lecture proceeded, and sometimes this would drive him back to the Word of God to search out the answers. So both he and his students grew in their understanding of the Scriptures, and there are many alive today who still remember with gratitude how his teaching revolutionised their Christian lives and their theology.

"Foundation Truths", based on Hebrews 6v1,2, contains the essence of his teaching, built around his graphic representation of man's Spirit, Soul and Body (1Thess 5v23) - to which he gave the name 'Archie'! Any readers of these pages will find themselves challenged and stimulated theologically and generally, whether or not they agree with all Mr Parker's conclusions.

A Guide to the Diagrams

The Serpent represents sin; dead when coiled, alive when upright

The Book represents Moral Law, whether of God or of conscience

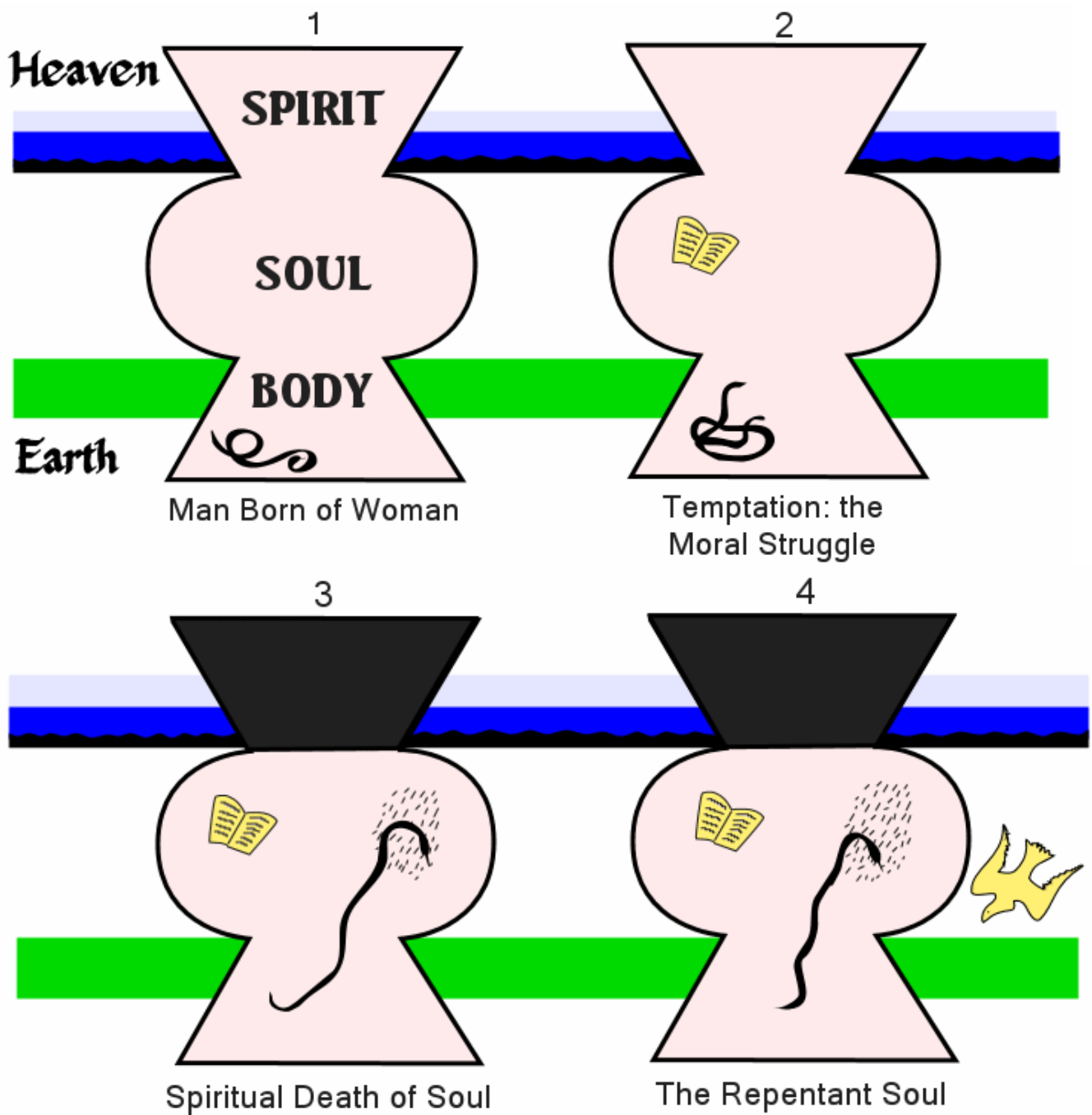
The Dove represents The Holy Spirit of God

The Cross represents Calvary

The Black Line represents the first Heaven, the home of Satan

The Black Colouring represents that which is dead to God

The Gold Colouring represents that which belongs to the Sons of God





New Birth



Water Baptism



The Spirit filled Christian



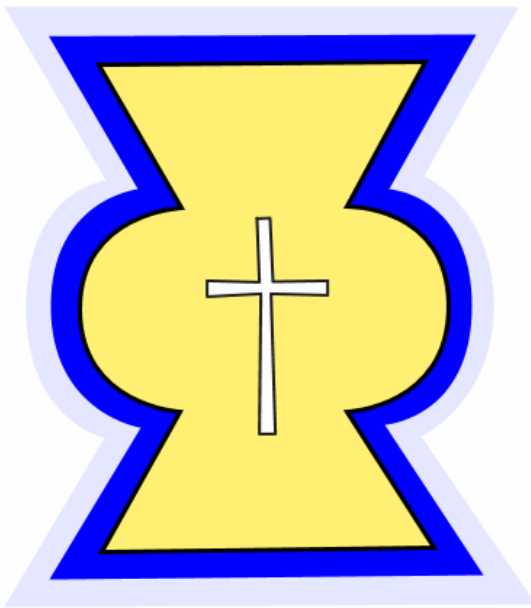
Death of a Christian



Death of O.T. Saint

Death of Ignorant

Death of God's enemies



The Resurrection
of a Son of God.

Introduction

New converts to Christianity are spoken of in the Bible as babes in Christ, with hearts full of desire for understanding, and minds equally full of problems and questions. Peter (1Pet 2v2) tells us that what they need is the sincere milk of the Word, if they are to grow to a healthy maturity. When they are grown up there is solid food for them too; but until then they need milk and not meat.

Many young Christians have suffered life-long spiritual indigestion or the diseases that spring from malnutrition owing to a wrong diet in their early days. Those who are ignorant of the Scriptures can be misled by any teacher with strong personality, and need to acquire for themselves that full assurance of understanding of which St. Paul speaks. (Col 2v2, Heb 10v22)

It is of the first importance therefore to know what is meant by the milk of the Word; and our Father has left us in no doubt on this matter, but has detailed it for us in Heb 5v11 to 6v2.

The Foundation Truths, the A.B.C. of Christianity, are seven in number, Repentance from dead works, Faith towards God, Baptism in Water, Baptism in Spirit, the Laying on of hands, Resurrection of the dead, Eternal Judgment. Only after he has learnt the truth in these simple matters is the Christian baby ready to consider the harder problems and deeper wisdom of God's Revelation.

These studies are designed primarily therefore to lead the new convert to those passages of the Bible in which these matters are most simply handled, that he may see for himself the Scriptural basis of his faith, and be fully persuaded in his own mind. In the hour of battle a man cannot stand upon another's teaching, but only upon those parts of the Truth that he has made his own.

It will soon become apparent to him that these Foundation Truths show the steps by which His Heavenly Father plans to change a "man born of woman," who was rightly at home on this earth, into a mature "Son of God" who longs for His Heavenly home and destiny.

I am indeed grateful to Mr. George Newsholme (Editor of Redemption Tidings), who has not only read the manuscript, but has also written the preface and helped in the final form of this booklet. My hearty thanks are also due to Miss E. F. Dodgson, who patiently typed and retyped the manuscript, and to my wife for the designs of the diagrams. May the Lord be able to use it to His own refreshment, Prov 25v13, and to the blessing of His people.

Chapter I: Repentance From Dead Works

The first Foundation Truth contains the arresting phrase "Dead works," which is aptly illustrated by our Lord's words, "Let the dead bury their dead," or St. Paul's phrase, "... is dead while she liveth." Fully to understand these words we need to consider the birth and constitution of a "man born of woman." (Luke 9v60, 1Tim 5v6)

The First Birth

He is tripartite; body, soul and spirit. His body comes from his parents, his spirit comes from God, and his soul, i.e., himself, is the result of this union of body and spirit, a new individual without experience of any kind, but good because made by God Himself. Man is a soul, he possesses a spirit and a body, the former whereby he can contact the spirit world, and the latter with which to enter and appreciate the material world. The soul, if it loses its body, is dead to this world; if it loses its spirit, it is dead to God and the Heavenly world. If it loses both, it is dead to both worlds, conscious only of the isolation and hopeless darkness of death. Gen 2v7—margin "lives," Num 16v22, Isaiah 57v16, Eccles 12v7, 1Thess 5v23, Matt 11v11, Heb 4v12, John 3v6, 1Cor 2v10-16, Job 10v21-22, Heb 2v15, Luke 12v5.

Every child therefore that is born into this world is alive to God through the spirit which He has given it, and alive to this world through the body which it has inherited through its parents. Its spirit is, of course, perfect like all God's works; but its flesh, coming down ultimately from Adam, is imperfect, and liable in varying degrees to desires which are sinful.

These desires, however, are not in the soul of the baby but in its flesh, and therefore this "sin in the flesh" is in the Bible phrase "Dead," i.e., harmless, and the child itself is alive to God through its spirit with which He has endowed it. So that looking at young children, our Lord said that of such was the Kingdom of Heaven; and exhorted us to become like them; which He could hardly have done if their souls had been as a matter of fact incapable of goodness, totally depraved, and fit only for eternal punishment, as so many Christians have thought they ought to believe! God's mercies are over all His Works, and the child of even the wickedest parents is not born without the gracious gift of spirit from the Creator.

Every baby then is born alive to God and well pleasing to Him, and receives grace from God through its own spirit, which God has given it, and its Guardian Angel whom God has appointed over it.

NB: The phrase "Original Sin," which, like that other phrase "born in sin," is not scriptural, would be shorn of its misleading implications if it were changed into the Scriptural language "Dead sin in the flesh." Every theory of "Original sin" which locates the effect of Adam's sin in the soul of his descendants, instead of in their flesh, or implies that the child is born without grace from God or in any way "Dead to God" is to be unhesitatingly rejected.

The first diagram therefore shows the condition in which all "men born of women" come into the world. (Rom 7v8-8v3, Mark 10v14, Matt 18v1-10, Psalm 51v5, Job 14v1-4, Job 15v14) See Diagram 1—Man born of Woman.

Note on various erroneous doctrines

There are several erroneous teachings about the fall of man, which crept into the Church at a very early date and should be noted at this point; since not only have they led to wrong practices, but they have also clouded the minds of men and dimmed the glory of God, presenting such a picture of Him that, while men could still fear Him as the Almighty, they could neither respect His justice nor discover His love.

The soul of a baby is not hopelessly corrupt because of Adam's sin; it is its flesh only which is tainted; its soul and spirit are pure, being made by God. Mark 10v14, Isaiah 57v3-7,16, Eccles 7v29, 12v7, Num 16v22.

A child is not born dead in sin, alienated from God and without knowledge of Him. It is the sin which is dead; the child is alive. Rom 1v19-21, Acts 17v27, Matt 18v3-5, Rom 7v8-9.

God (a) does not impute the sin of Adam to his children, nor (b) does He impute the righteousness of Christ to a Christian.

(a) In Ezek 18, God clearly teaches that a man dies for his own sin, not his father's; and that it would be wholly unrighteous to blame one man for the sin of another. (2Chron 25v3-4)

(b) Neither is the righteousness of Christ imputed to anyone; it is Christ's death, which is imputed, suffered on our behalf. The moral perfection of Christ cannot be imputed to anyone; but it is imparted as we obey Him. Each man will receive the reward of his own deeds. (2Cor 3v18, 5v10)

NB: The Greek word dikaiosune has two meanings: (a) Justification when brought to trial by the Law; this can take place in two ways;

1) The evidence shows you not guilty; and you are discharged;

2) The evidence shows you guilty, but you, or someone else, pay the penalty. Thus the convict who has done his time is "justified" and no longer a convict: it is libellous to speak of him as such! (b) A moral character, which deserves praise because, so far from breaking the Law, it goes the "second mile."

Diagram 2a Is the condition of the sinner when saved; he is "freed from the Law." But God wants him to live so that he becomes, **diagram 2b** and is "saved with glory." (2Tim 2v10, 1Pet 1v17, Heb 2v10)

It is not true that God is angry with us, for our "fallen nature," and would be justified in condemning us to Hell for it. Out of this slander upon the justice of God has arisen the erroneous practice of Infant Baptism, which is an attempt to counter the supposed danger by means of Baptismal regeneration. If it were true that we were so born that sin is inevitable, not only would repentance be impossible, but we should have a perfect excuse for our sin, and could not possibly feel guilty. Historically and practically the doctrine that sin is inevitable always leads to this very frame of mind, an acquiescence in it as a regrettable necessity: humanum est errare! God, of course, could not and does not, condemn us for what we cannot avoid; neither could men repent of actions which were forced upon them by their nature. They could only grieve over the fact that they were so badly created: and for that they would of necessity blame, not themselves, but their Creator. Gen 18v23-25, Rom 3v5-6, Rom 5v13.

NB1: The fact that all men do as a matter of fact sin is not due to some taint of "original" sin in their nature which makes sin inevitable; but as the Bible says, to the fact that "all like sheep go astray." It is the herd instinct and the fear of standing alone which operates so powerfully. We are to confess Christ before men.

Sin is not due to some flaw in the soul, but simply to the possession of free will. Both Adam and Eve sinned, though from different motives, in spite of the fact that they were created completely perfect in body, soul and spirit. Lucifer also sinned, though perfect in all his ways from the Creation. Perfection of creation is no safeguard against sin! (Eccles 7v29, Ezek 28v12-15, Isaiah 53v6, Gen 2v5-25)

Neither is perfection of surroundings a preventative. The first sins both in Heaven and Earth were committed under ideal conditions.

NB2: Even perfect flesh, such as Adam and Eve possessed, was endowed by God with desires, which unless curbed by the soul would lead it to sin. The realisation that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasant to look at is put first in the motives that led to Eve's sin! The stronger the bodily instinct, the greater the danger of misuse. The strongest and most lovely of all physical instincts implanted by God, the sexual, is also the most dangerous unless ruled by the soul. The perfect flesh of the perfect man contained within it the possibility of temptation and sin just as inevitably as did the fallen flesh of Adam! The only safety of the most perfect flesh lies in its control by a wise and loving soul. (Gen 3v6, Matt 4v2-4, Matt 26v41, 1Cor 9v27)

NB3: While it is true that Cain and Abel came into the world with smaller opportunities than Adam and Eve, since God no longer visited them intimately in the garden, it is also true (a) that God did not again ask so high a standard and (b) that Enoch walked with God and that Noah pleased Him. It is true that the fall of Adam brought the whole race down to a lower level of possibilities; it is also true that the lower level was capable of achievement, and that God could still be pleased with men. From Adam justification was no longer by works but by faith; and the rite of blood-sacrifice for sin was well known from Abel, who was the first of a long line of men who have pleased God by their faith. (Acts 10v35, Ezek 14v14, 2Chron 20v7, Heb 11v1-40, Hab 2v4)

"As in Adam all die even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1Cor 15v22), does not refer to our souls, but to our bodies. If it did refer to our souls, it would be a powerful argument for Universalism! Adam died physically not because he sinned, but because God drove him from the Tree of Life; otherwise in spite of his sin he would have lived for ever. For the same reason all men suffer physical death. Hence all, including the wicked, will be raised from death by Christ. The death of this resurrection body in the Lake of Fire, which is the second time a man loses his body, i.e., his second death, will be for a man's own unrepented and hence unforgivable sin: and will be eternal, leaving the soul in hopeless impotence and anguish. (Acts 24v15, John 5v28-29, Rev 20v11-15, Rom 2v1-9, Mark 9v43-50, Gen 3v22-24)

Moral Law

There comes a time, however, when moral law enters into the soul of a child, either from instruction in God's Word, or in the ordinary course of nature. When this has happened, and the child begins to pass moral judgment upon others, then sin in the flesh, which has hitherto been dead and harmless, comes alive, and proceeds to entice and try to deceive the soul, as in the Garden of Eden. Rom 7v9-11, 1Cor 15v56, James 1v14-15, Rom 4v15, Rom 5v13, Rom 2v1-16, Matt 7v1-5. See Diagram 2—The Moral Struggle.

Note on Temptation

It is essential to realise that temptation is not sin. God did not intend Adam and Eve to live without temptation; since it is only by resisting it that frail innocence can develop into strong purity, and learn not only to love good but also to hate evil. Accordingly Satan was allowed to enter Eden; Job was left in his hand "without cause," the Israelites were led through that great and terrible wilderness, Jesus was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil; the disciples were handed over to be sifted as wheat.

The surest way to throw a maid into the arms of her lover is to speak against him! Every instinct of protection and loyalty rises up in passionate rejection of the imputation. So should it have been with Adam and Eve in the garden when Satan slandered their friend and Creator. They should have risen up in defence of Him they loved, clung the closer for the attack, and conceived such a hatred for Satan that he would no longer have dared to enter their garden. Such, no doubt, was the design of the Almighty, but it was frustrated by the folly and disloyalty of the perfect creatures, Adam and Eve! Eve allowed herself to be deceived by Satan's innuendoes, and Adam put his wife's companionship before his God's; as many another man has done, since the first one said, "I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come." It was God's greatest gift which brought about the downfall of the perfect man! Solomon, the wisest man, owed his downfall to his inability to use the gifts of God aright. It was Lucifer's wisdom and ability, the gifts of God, which fed the pride which caused his ruin. Every blessing, indeed, from God has in itself the seeds of temptation: and history is full of men whose heart was lifted up to rebellion by the very gifts, which should have made them grateful. (2Chron 18v1, 2Chron 26v16, 32v25)

Temptation is not sin; the hour of fiercest temptation can be the hour of greatest purity. By allowing us to inherit from our parents a body from which temptation is inevitable, God has not been unfair to us, but has given us the opportunity by resisting such temptation, of establishing ourselves for ever in His love and service. When God gave men and angels freewill He made it possible for them to disobey any command He might impose and to embark on a life of selfishness instead of love. Hence temptation was possible in Heaven before sin occurred. (Ezek 28v11-15.)

The fact that we are tempted, however severely, whether by the flesh, the world, or the Devil, is not accepted by God as an excuse for sinning. We are indeed to welcome, though not to invite, temptation, albeit with fear and trembling humility, for the overcoming of temptation is the royal road to the Throne of God. (James 1v2-4,12-15, Heb 2v18, 4v15, Luke 22v28-32, 1Pet 1v6-7, Gen 3, Deut 8v2-3,15-16, Matt 4v1-11, Job, chapters 1 and 2, Gal 6v1, 1Cor 10v13)

It is obvious that temptation and sin are permanent possibilities of a "free will"; by which we mean that a man can choose his own course, whether it be good or evil, even if he lacks the power to put it into action. The whole aim of God is therefore to do away with sin, not by excluding temptation but by making the soul immune to it; as the body becomes immune to disease not by elimination of bacilli but by the setting up of a sufficient resistance to them (Heb 1v9). Only the man who hates evil is safe against temptation. Therefore God has allowed evil great liberty in this world, that by awful experience of its effects, its deceitful promises might be exposed, and mankind might learn to dread it above all things and to achieve an iron determination never to commit it. (Luke 15v17, Heb 1v9, Psalm 119v97-104, Heb 12v4)

Note on Conscience

Conscience is not the voice of God, neither is it necessarily pleasing to God or according to His Law. It is that standard of conduct which a man lays down for his neighbour, to which he is himself accountable. This standard is formed by a man (a) out of his own heart in automatic reaction to his neighbour's acts, e.g., the last six of the ten commandments are the involuntary response of human nature to the selfishness of another which threatens its happiness "Thou shalt not steal" pours out of the lips of the man who is being robbed: "thou shalt not commit adultery" is the cry of the man whose wife is unfaithful: "thou shalt not covet" is the instinctive thought in the heart of the man who sees his neighbour eyeing his poultry too lovingly! (b) Out of the opinions of the society in which he lives. (c) Out of any revelation which he may have received of God. By this and by this alone will he be judged. (Rom 2v1-16, 5v13, 14v5, Luke 12v47-48, James 4v17, 1Cor 4v4, Acts 26v9, Matt 7v1-5, Titus 1v15, 1Tim 4v2)

Life or death

It is the peculiar glory of Jesus, which He shares with no other, that though tempted in all points like as we are yet He never yielded to the solicitations of sin, from whatever quarter they might come. Wherefore for this reason God has given Him the Name which is above every name. (John 8v46, Luke 4v1-13, 22v28, Heb 2v14-18, 4v14-15, 5v7-10, Phil 2v5-11)

It has been the tragedy of the human race on the contrary, that like sheep we have all turned to our own way and gone astray; so that, instead of growing strong in character by continuous and successful struggle against temptation, we have become the weak slaves of sin, and found out that the soul that sinneth it shall die. Let it be noted that only a living soul can die; a dead soul is already dead. Hence the salvation of God finds us in the condition of diagram 3, not from compulsion but of choice. The tragedy of Eden is continually repeated, so that each soul having once turned aside finds itself a captive, cut off from God by the death of the spirit; and able, and at first

at any rate contented, only to live in the world of sense through its body. The whole life of such a person is described in the vivid phrase "dead works" or the life of a man dead to God.

There is a short story by H. G. Wells entitled "The Country of the Blind," which is an apt illustration of this condition. In this tale, a man with eyes strays into the kingdom of The Blind and is taken captive. The fact that he can see, however, is not a help to him but a hindrance, since it rouses the jealousy and dislike of the blind, who prefer to think that no such thing as sight exists. In the end they will allow him to live in their midst only upon the condition that they may put his eyes out and make him as one of themselves. So would the world put out the Christian's eyes, and pull him down into their chosen darkness. (John 3v19, Rom 1v18-21, Isaiah 53v6, Luke 9v60, John 8v31-34, Rom 1v18-32, 5v12, 6v12-16, 7v9-11, Gal 5v15-16, Eph 2v1-3, 1Tim 5v6, Ezek 18v4, James 1v14-15) See Diagram 3—Death of a Soul.

Note on Death of the Spirit

Be it noted that a dead spirit is not an annihilated or non-existent spirit, but one which no longer performs the duty for which it was intended, that is, to contact God. A "dead spirit" though unable any longer to contact God, can yet get into touch with other dead spirits, both angels and demons, which inhabit the first Heaven and the earth: viz., the black line in the diagrams. (Eph 2v2, 6v12, 2Cor 4v4, 1Cor 10v19-21, Isaiah 8v19, 1Sam 28, 2Kings 21v6, 1Tim 4v1, 1John 4v1-3)

Repentance

The consideration of the phrase "dead works" has made it clear that man's estrangement from God is due in each case to his own deliberate act.

He who hides his action from his fellow man whom he can see, hides it also from the righteous God whom he cannot see; and comforts himself for having done so by some protective covering, e.g., "There is no God," or "God doth not see," "You can't expect to be too good while in the flesh," or even "God doesn't mind sin so long as you are saved."

The modern sinner hides himself from the true God as definitely as did Adam and Eve; and the various religions of the world have as their motive the desire to pretend that there is no righteous God who has revealed Himself to us, but only gods who leave us free to do evil. (Psalm 14v1, 36v1, 50v21, Eccles 7v16, Rom 1v23, 2Cor 4v4)

It is clear then that, until he is willing to retrace that step and come into relationship with God again, even God cannot help him. This willingness to change his attitude towards God is called repentance; and, since nothing can be done without it, all God's efforts are lovingly turned to bringing it about. The Holy Spirit uses in each case the most appropriate means to appeal to the heart of the one with whom He is dealing. It may be fear of judgment, fear of consequences, dreadful experiences of an ungodly life, revelation of the love of God in sending His Son to die for sinners, experience of His power in signs and wonders, the hope of eternal life instead of the fear of death. The variety of the means He uses is as great as that of the hearts with which He has to deal, but the end is always the same, to persuade the ungodly to be willing to come into contact with a living God, to be reconciled to the One they have distrusted. (John 16v8, Mark 1v15, Acts 9v32-35, 8v6-8, 16v27-30, 17v30-31, 2v37, Luke 11v31-32, 13v1-9, Rom 5v8, John 3v16)

NB1: God does give space for repentance, but does not wait beyond the appointed time. (Gen 6v1-7, Luke 13v1-9, Rev 2v21, Heb 12v17, 6v4-8, 10v26-30, Rom 2v1-11, Dan 4v27-31, Jonah 3v4, Jer 18v7-10, 2Chron 36v14-16, Eccles 8v11)

NB2: Repentance always leads to action. (Jonah 3, Luke 3v8, Acts 2v38, Luke 15v17-19, 19v8-9)

It includes hatred of sin, sorrow for those we have wronged, and a desire to put things right; remorse is sorrow for oneself, because one's sin has been exposed and must be paid for. (Matt 27v3-5, 2Sam 17v23)

Thus the first Foundation Truth is illustrated by—Diagram 4—The Repentant Soul.

Chapter II: Faith Towards God

The new Birth

As soon as the Holy Spirit sees that the soul is willing to believe the truth about God, He enables it to do so by begetting it a new spirit. Spiritual things are only discerned by spirit, and therefore the Lord told Nicodemus that what he needed was not teaching, but a living spirit. The body and spirit might be compared to a couple of radio sets for receiving and transmitting, the one tuned into the seen world, the other to the unseen: the soul being entirely dependent upon them for contact with either world. A room may be filled with all kinds of music, plays, talks from all over the world: yet its occupants are in complete ignorance of the fact, since they have never possessed or even heard of a wireless set! So it is with both spiritual and natural things. The world is full of sounds,

but this one is ignorant of them as he was born deaf: in a similar way, heaven is shut to the man whose spirit is dead, since he has lost that part which alone can receive impressions from the spiritual world; and his one overwhelming need is that this part should be restored, i.e., born again, so that once more he may be in contact. (John 3v5, 1Cor 2v14)

The more the radio is used the wider the knowledge of the outside world. There are those who might be said to live at their radio: we are expected likewise to live in the spirit! Some radios have a wider range and more perfect reception than others: so the spirit of Christ is more sensitive than the spirit of a servant and opens to us a much wider range of understanding of spiritual realities. (Rom 8v15)

NB1: It is the spirit which is born again, not the soul; the soul, which has already lived in the human family, is adopted into the Royal Family of God, and has to learn how to live in its new surroundings. (John 3v1-8, Eph 1v5, 4v11-16, Rom 6v15-23, Gal 4v6, 2Pet 1v4, 1Tim 3v15, 2Cor 3v18)

NB2: That, which a Son of God receives at his new birth, is not the Holy Spirit Himself, but that which is born of Him, holy spirit. The Holy Spirit Himself is normally given through the laying on of the hands of one in whose body He has taken up His abode, and this happens after the new birth. The Holy Spirit is a person; the holy spirit, which He gives at the new birth, is a thing, just as the body, which the parents give, is a thing, not a person. (John 3v6, Acts 8v17, 9v17, 19v6, Eph 1v13 "after")

So the Apostles received holy spirit and were born again on the night of the Resurrection. After that they were continually in the Temple praising and blessing God. It was, however, not until the day of Pentecost that they received the Holy Spirit Himself, who immediately manifested His presence in a miraculous fashion. Much confusion has arisen through the failure to differentiate between the Person and the thing. Since there are no capital letters or other ways of distinguishing between them in the original MSS., every translator is free to use his own judgment in the matter, and so mistakes have been made. (John 20v22, Acts 2v4, Luke 24:53)

All Christians then have that which the Holy Spirit begets, and all Christians have also the Holy Spirit Himself "with them," for it was He who brought them to repentance and begat them again. It is, however, those who are baptised in the Spirit who have Him "in them." (Rom 8v9, John 14v17, Acts 19v2-6.)

The body of every Son of God is a temple of the Holy Ghost: but that temple is empty until the Spirit enters it, of which entry there is always a clear sign. Even as the Tabernacle and Temple were first prepared and built, and after that manifestly filled with the glory of God. (1Cor 3v16-17, 6v19, Exodus 40v33-34, 1Kings 8v10-11, Mal 3v1)

The Gift of God

Faith is therefore the gift of God, because it is the result of the new spirit, which is born; just as hearing is the result of an ear, or sight of an eye. A man believes because he has been given a living spirit; and because he has such a spirit he cannot help believing, even if for some selfish reason he may wish to do so. Only by spiritual suicide can he kill this spirit and become "twice dead." In such cases he knows what he has done and lives in apprehension of fiery judgment (1Pet 1v23-2v2, Eph 2v8-10, Heb 6v4-8, 10v26-29, Jude 12)

It is essential that faith should be the gift of God and not a human ability. Were it not so, a man might be discouraged by the thought that he had always found faith difficult, and was in this way handicapped: but, since it is the gift of God, all men may have it, for God gives it freely to all who will accept it. Indeed, men whose thoughts have been far from God have found themselves suddenly believing in Christ so that to their great surprise the whole course of their lives has been changed. God has made it possible for the most difficult and unlikely soul to believe, by giving him spirit, the source of faith, that through which the unseen is apprehended. The soul by itself is not in touch with spiritual things: but as soon as its spirit is quickened by God, the soul finds itself believing in what before seemed to it foolishness. (1Cor 2v10-16.)

The Food of Faith

The food of faith is the Word of God. Without regular feeding, the spirit grows weakly and eventually dies, just as the body cannot remain alive without its proper food. Christian weakness is due generally, not to inherent inability or wickedness, but simply to malnutrition or positive starvation. This God-given food rightly used, is sufficient to ensure spiritual victory on earth, and to give us our inheritance in heaven. Like the body, the spirit needs not only food but also exercise. This exercise is most naturally taken in prayer. A spirit, which is fed by the Word, soon grows strong enough to engage in prayer and to exercise spiritual gifts. (Matt 4v4, 2Tim 3v14-17, 1Tim 4v13-16, Deut 8v3, 1Pet 2v1-3, Acts 20v32, Jer 15v16, John 6v26-63, Job 23v12, Ezek 2v8-3v3)

The Fight of Faith

The fight of faith is allowed by God to bring us to a state of strength and purity. Faith, the gift of God, brings justification; tried faith covers us with glory. (Job, chapters 1 and 2, James 1v3,12, 1Pet 1v7, Luke 22v28-29, 1Tim 6v12, 2Tim 4v7, Eph 6v12, Matt 4v1-11)

The Rest of Faith

The effect of such a tried faith is peace of mind, and the ability to depend not upon ourselves, but upon God. (Heb 3v13-4v11, Rom 5v1-11, 1Pet 1v21)

Life in the food

There is no lesson more vital to the young convert than the realisation of his dependence upon the Bread which came down from Heaven. Babies grow, not because of their own health or strength, but simply because they are fed. The life is in the food. The Christian is entirely dependent upon his living bread. (Cf. Psalm 1)

NB1: The New Birth is wholly a gracious act of God, and is not the result of any action on man's part. It is not the consequence, but the cause of faith. (John 1v13, James 1v18, 1Pet 1v3, Eph 2v8-10, cf. Luke 6v10)

This living faith, given by God through the New Birth, is what God counts as justification. It is of the heart, and not just the intellect; and includes:

(a) An understanding and grateful acceptance of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, so that we believe as He did about sin and its consequences and atonement; we are His brethren, like-minded on these vital subjects. (Isaiah 53, Luke 24v25-28,44-47, Rom 3v21, 5v21, 10v9-10, Gal 3v1-15, 1Pet 1v17-21)

(b) Actions, which proceed naturally from it. (Matt 3v8, Luke 19v8, James 2v14-26, Mark 16v16, Acts 2v38, 8v36-38, 10v47-48, 19v18-19, Rom 1v5, 16v26, Gal 5v6, 2Cor 4v13, Heb 11)

NB2: The New Birth does not put the believer back into the position in which he was born. Then he was "born of woman" with the spirit of a servant of God, looking upon God as his Creator and Lord, and upon this earth as his natural habitat. At death he expected to go to Hades, an experience which he dreaded, since he was cut off from God's presence for a season through the loss of his spirit; but his hope was a resurrection to life upon the earth at the last day, when God should restore all things. He was in fact of the earth earthy, for God had created Adam and Eve to live for ever upon this earth through the Tree of Life.

At the New Birth, however, he becomes a child of God with the same spirit of Sonship that Christ has. Earth is no longer his habitat, but Heaven. At the death of his body, since he retains his spirit, he goes, not to Hades, but to Paradise and the presence of God; and at the resurrection he will receive a body fitted for life, not on the earth, but in Heaven. His fellowship is no longer with man born of woman, but through the help of the Holy Spirit of God, with his Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the rest of the Royal Family of God in Heaven and earth. Although the New Birth is an experience which is highly individualistic, yet the effect of it is to place this lonely person into a family in which he should grow to maturity. (Rom 8v9-15, John 8v35, Heb 11v40, 2v14-15, 2Tim 1v10, Matt 11v11, Luke 16v19-31, 2Kings 20v1-3 (contrast Phil 2v21-23, Acts 7v55-59), Rev 5v9-11, Acts 3v21, John 11v24-26, Job 10v21-22, 19v25-27, Ezek 37v11-14, Dan 12v2, Heb 12v22-24, Phil 3v17-21, Col 3v1-4, 1John 1v3, Matt 12v46-50, 23v9) See Diagram 5—The New Birth

Chapter III: Baptism In Water

Baptism in water, as a divine ordinance connected with repentance and forgiveness of sins, was already known to Israel through John the Baptist; he announced it as a preparation for the coming Messiah, Who should baptise in the Holy Ghost, and also open the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matt 3v1-12, Mark 1v1-8, Luke 3v1-17, John 1v26,27,33)

Christian Baptism, however, had an even deeper meaning added to it after the death and resurrection of Christ.

(a) It is the way appointed by God whereby we wash away in water the sins which God has forgiven through the blood of Jesus, and receive a glorious consciousness of complete cleansing from the past. (Eph 1v7, Rev 7v14, Acts 22v16, 1Pet 3v21, Mark 16v16, Titus 3v5, Rev 1v5 (R.V.), Heb 10v22, Psalm 103v12)

(b) It is also an act, which typifies the death and burial of the old worldly unbeliever and the rising up of a new spiritual believer to live in a new and holy fellowship, that is, that of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is the birth of a sanctification which is to grow to perfection. (Matt 28v19, Rom 6v1-11, 1v17, Col 2v12, 3v1-4, 1John 1v1-3, 2Cor 7v1, 3v18, Heb 12v6-14, John 1v16)

NB1: It is a definite command of both Christ and His Apostles. (Mark 16v16, Matt 28v19, Acts 2v38, 10v48)

NB2: Being associated with salvation and the washing away of sins, it was also treated as a matter, not of choice, but of urgency. (Acts 2v41, 8v36, 16v33, 9v18, 22v16, Mark 16v16)

NB3: The Christian is freed from sin, but not from temptation. (John 15v3, 8v31, Rom 6v1-8:4, 1Cor 10v1-13, James 1v2-4)

NB4: Christian Baptism, being in the Name of the Spirit, as well as of the Father and the Son, must include some instruction about the Spirit of God, and so paves the way for the next Foundation Truth, the Baptism in the Spirit. (Matt 28v19) See Diagram 6—Water Baptism

Chapter IV: The Baptism In The Spirit

The Baptism in the Spirit is a phrase used in Scripture to describe the experience wherein the Holy Spirit enters the Temple of God, i.e., the body of a Son of God. The Holy Spirit, who brought the sinner to repentance and begat him again into the family of God, desires a still closer union, whereby He that was "with us" now enters "into us." As an evidence that He has entered the believer's body, He begins to use the most unruly part of it, i.e., the tongue, to speak in a language of which the believer is ignorant; thus making it manifest that there are now two occupants of the one body.

The Baptism of the Spirit is spoken of by John Baptist and Christ as a vital element in the work of Salvation He came to procure. (John 1v29-33, 7v37-39, 16v7-15, 14v17, 2v21, Luke 24v49, Acts 1v4-8, 2v3-21, 10v44-48, 11v15-17, 19v1-6, Mark 16v17, 1Cor 3v16, 6v19, 2Cor 6v16.)

The actual Baptism in the Spirit is, however, only the initial experience of a fellowship, which is to be eternal; and the initial evidence is meant to be followed by further manifestations of the Spirit's presence. The New Testament Church is a society of the Sons of God, in whose bodies dwells the same Holy Spirit of God, manifesting His Almighty presence by the various miraculous Gifts of the Spirit. (1Cor 12v1-14v40)

The Church, the present earthly Body of Christ, who is its head, is therefore to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, even as was Christ's own earthly body, so that the will of God may continue to be done by the Spirit of God in the Sons of God. (John 14v16-26, 15v26, 2Cor 3v17-18, Acts 4v31, 5v3,32, 7v51,52, 8v29,39, 13v2. etc.). See Diagram 7—The Spirit-filled Christian

NB1: In the Old Covenant it was the Holy Spirit who laid hold of the chosen Servants of God, even against their desire, that they might perform the task allotted to them. The instances of Moses, Amos, Jonah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel spring to the mind.

In the New Covenant the privilege is opened to all the Sons of God at their own desire. (Exodus 3 & 4, Jer 1v4-7, Ezek 3v14, Jonah, Amos 7v10-15, John 7v39, Acts 2v38-39, 5v32, Gal 4v6)

NB2: The Holy Spirit comes as Comforter, Guide, Teacher, Co-Worker and Lord. We are to please Him, therefore, and not to cause Him grief. The great essential for all who seek the Baptism in the Spirit is a determination to obey Him when He has entered. Failure to do so, and continuous stubbornness, will lead to the disaster which overtook Saul. (1Sam 16v14, Josh 5v13, Eph 2v22, 4v30, Heb 6v3-8, 10v26-31, 1Tim 1v19)

NB3: The Baptism in the Spirit is not a means whereby the believer is sanctified; it is the means whereby the already sanctified believer is enabled to do the miraculous works of God, by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. (Acts 1v8, Luke 24v49, 1Cor 12-14, John 5v19-30, Luke 4v14, Matt 12:28)

NB4: Sanctification is the effect of the Word of God on the obedient hearer. As the true state of affairs enters the believer's heart, he is more and more powerfully drawn not only to forsake sin, but also to throw himself heart and soul into his Master's business. For sanctification is not the cultivation of one's own soul, which leads to Pharisaism, but the whole-hearted interest in the souls of others. (Luke 15v25-30, Isaiah 65v1-5, John 8v31-2, 15v3, 17v17, Eph 5v26)

Chapter V: The Laying On Of Hands

The teaching of Scripture is that spirit is a divine substance which can come direct from Heaven, or be imparted by physical contact with one in whom the Spirit of God is. As such a substance it is capable of having a physical effect upon the material substance of which the world is composed; so that a house can be shaken by it, or a new eye formed.

It is also clear that spirit is subdivided into different types, even as light is composed of different colours. So that, when Jacob was blessing the sons of Joseph, it mattered which hand was placed upon which boy, since the blessings were different, and came through different hands. (Gen 48v13-19.) So also the "divisions of spirit" of Heb 2v4 refer to this difference; each separate kind of spirit carrying in itself the blessing that was to be given. The same thought is given in "the seven spirits of God" of Rev 1v4.

The Laying on of Hands, i.e., physical contact—even of the whole body in the raising of the dead—was the usual way whereby spirit was imparted, though at times the unction was so great that even without actual contact those near a spirit-filled person would receive it. Even inanimate objects could be so impregnated with spirit as to convey it to a person at a distance. (Acts 8v18, 9v12-17, 5v15, 19v12, 20v10, Matt 14v36, Mark 5v27-30, 2Kings 13v21, 1Kings 17v21, 2Kings 4v34-35)

The following are typical of the blessings imparted by the Laying on of Hands:

The Baptism in the Spirit and the Healing of the Body. (Acts 9v17, 8v18, 19v6, 28v8, Mark 16v18)

The spirit of Wisdom. (Deut 34v9)

An unspecified gift. (1Tim 4v14, 2Tim 1v6)

A future career. (Gen 48v13-19)

The impartation of spirit through the Laying on of Hands means that the blessing is the poorer and the blessed the richer for the transaction (Luke 5v17, 6v12-19, 8v46), and therefore the blessing needs a continual refilling if he is to continue imparting. Hence, the Lord's habit of retiring for prayer in the midst of such ministry, e.g., Luke 5v16 (Greek—"kept retiring in the desert places and praying").

In all these matters we have the example of our Lord, who laid hands not only upon the sick (Mark 1v40-41), but also upon the babies (Mark 10v13-16)

While it is true and scriptural that spiritual blessing is imparted through the Laying on of Hands, it is equally true that God could and did dispense with any such medium when it so pleased Him, e.g., Acts 1v2-4, 10v44-45, John 4v50, Matt 8v8-13, John 11v43

Since spirit in all its varieties can therefore be imparted through physical contact, it is clear that the Laying on of Hands for such a gracious purpose is indeed one of the Foundation Truths, to be not only understood, but also put into practice. Here again, as in everything pertaining to God, the safeguard against misuse is an honest heart.

By the act of the Laying of Hands you cannot impart what is not in you; and if you attempt to do so the result will be failure and disappointment. Matt 7v22 makes it clear that many will claim to have served God in the spirit who never knew Him. It is for this reason that care is necessary in all things pertaining to the spirit life; just as Israel needed to be watchful in Canaan (Josh 8v7,9,14). It was because of the dangers that awaited them in Canaan that the people refused to go over. Many Christians have been kept from a full Pentecostal experience by the same motive. They are unable to trust the Lord to see them through the undoubted dangers, and prefer to play for safety. (Num 13 & 14)

Chapter VI: The Resurrection Of The Dead

Belief in the Resurrection of the body is implicit in all Bible history. It lay at the very root of the Patriarchal and Jewish theology. The promises of God, which had no fulfilment in the life time of those who believed them, could only be received and enjoyed after a resurrection from the dead; without it they were null and void.

This belief runs all through the Old Testament like a golden thread. Abraham believed in the resurrection of Isaac, the Patriarchs died in this hope; Elijah and Elisha saw the dead raised to life before their eyes; Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Job all spoke of it with confidence. It was the only hope of Martha in the hour of Lazarus' death. (Heb 11v9-21, 1Kings 17v22, 2Kings 4v34, Job 19v25-27, Isaiah 26v19, Ezek 37v1-14, Dan 12v2, John 11v24)

Belief in the resurrection of the body was also the centre of our Lord's life. He spoke repeatedly and confidently of His own death and resurrection, and of what He would do afterwards. It was lack of this faith in His disciples, which so bitterly disappointed Him, and was responsible for their own collapse.

Their own teaching after the Ascension of the Lord centred round His Death and Resurrection and physical return. The whole Christian position depended entirely upon its truth. For, as St. Paul said, if in this life only we have hope

in Christ then we are miserable indeed. Faith to raise the dead persisted in the Apostolic Church, and the last book in the Bible ends with the plain vision of a Universal Resurrection of all the dead of all the ages. It is the only doctrine which can give meaning to a Creation, which relentlessly slides into the darkness of frustration and death. (Luke 9v22-45, 24v25-27,36-47, Mark 16v14, Acts 2v22-36, 4v33, 17v32, 26v18-23, 9v36-42, 20v9-12, Rom 8v19-25 (compare Ecclesiastes), 1Cor 15, Rev 20v13)

There was, however, in the Bible a clear development of revelation concerning the resurrection of the dead. The original design of God, foiled by the Fall, was that man should live for ever upon a perfect earth, their bodies being sustained in health by eating of the Tree of Life continually. It is evident that the Tree contained elements which maintained the body in perfect condition. (Gen 3v22, Ezek 47v12, Rev 22v2) It was the action of God in cutting off the human race from this perfect food, which resulted in the universal death of the body. Nothing short, of this diet will restore earthly bodies to their original health. (Gen 3v22, 1Cor 15v22, Rom 5v12-14)

The Bible speaks of the death of the body as an unmitigated evil. It is the greatest and last enemy of the human race. Not until its final defeat will perfect victory be enjoyed. (1Cor 15v22-28, Rev 20v14) Hades (Greek) or Sheol (Hebrew) was the name of the place to which the souls of those who lost their bodies went. It had two sides to it, as the Lord showed in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, and between those two sides was a great gulf fixed. (Isaiah 14v9, Ezek 32v17-32, Luke 16:19-31)

(a) In the one division were the believers in God. The darkness of their experience was relieved by their faith in the resurrection at the Last Day; so that they might be said to rest in hope, together with Abraham the Father of the believing. Yet dread even of this softened experience kept the Old Testament saints all their lifetime in bondage, and made the hour of death highly unwelcome, since the loss of their spirit cut them off from God, and the loss of their body cut them off from the world. At this Resurrection they would enter into the enjoyment of the promises of God in Palestine during the Millennium. (Heb 2v15, Matt 4v16, Job 10v20-22, 2Kings 20v1-3 (contrast Phil 1v21-23), Luke 1v79, 16v19-23, Psalm 16v9-11, Isaiah 26v19, Ezek 37v1-14, Dan 12v2 (compare Ezek 44v13))

(b) In the other division were:

1) The ignorant dead, who in the darkness of the disembodied state had no ray of hope of any escape from their miserable condition. The final resurrection will come to them as a wholly unexpected shock.

2) The enemies of God whose hearts are filled with expectation of fiery judgment and punishment. (Psalm 73v18-19, Ezek 32v17-32, Mark 9v43-48 (compare Matt 8v29), Matt 25v41, Jude 6 & 7, 2Pet 2v4-9, Heb 10v27)

See Diagrams 8, 8a and 8b

Through Jesus Christ, however, came a mighty revelation, and also a great change in these matters.

(a) He revealed that against those who believed in Him the gates of Hades would not prevail at the death of their body. Since they retained their spirit at death they would not be cut off from the presence of God, but, on the contrary, would enjoy the happiness of Paradise in the spirit, instead of entering the darkness of Hades. He brought life and immortality to light. (John 11v21-26, 8v35-36,39-40,50-52, Matt 16v18, Luke 23v43, Phil 1v21, Acts 7v55-60, 2Tim 1v10, 2Cor 12v1-4.) See Diagram 8c

(b) He also revealed that unlike the Old Testament saints, who looked for an earthly resurrection in an earthly body in which they would enjoy earthly happiness, the Sons of God were called to mount up into Heaven and rule with Christ over the universe, and so would need Heavenly bodies like His. (John 14v2-3, Matt 24v31,47, Heb 3v1, Eph 1v18, 4v1, 1Cor 15v35-54, 1John 3:1-3) See Diagram 9—The Resurrection of a Son of God

(c) The Millennium, therefore, or 1,000 years of Christ's reign over this earth with a rod of iron, was to begin with a double resurrection:

1) That of Israel in earthly bodies to live in Palestine.

2) That of the Royal Family in Heavenly bodies to reign over this earth from the Heavenly Places. (Rev 20v4-6, Job 19v25-27, Isaiah 26v19, Ezek 37v1-14, 44v9-16, Dan 12v2, Phil 3v10-21, Luke 20v35, John 6v40, 1Cor 15v23-24, 1John 3v2)

(d) After the Millennium was over and the last revolt had failed, and after Heaven and earth had passed away, would come the final resurrection of all the dead of all the ages, and after that the Last Judgment, in order that those whose names were written in the Book of Life might enter into the eternity of Peace in the new earth, and

those whose names were not found therein might enter into the torment of hell for the same everlasting period of the Ages of the Ages. (Rev 20v11-21, John 5v28-29.)

(e) This final resurrection of the dead and Last Judgment upon the Sea of Glass would be followed by, as it were, a glorious resurrection of the old Heaven and earth into the glory of the New Heaven, the New Jerusalem and the New Earth, in which would be fulfilled the promise of Rev 21v4-5.

Note on Resurrection

A study of ICor 15v35-50 brings out the following points:

That, whereas our present earthly bodies may entirely mislead our neighbours about the state of our souls, our resurrection bodies will correspond to our souls, and so will differ in glory.

That recognition, therefore, will be not solely of the body but more essentially of the personality, e.g., the distorted body of a hunchback will give way to the glorious form of a Son of God. Peter knew that he had been with Moses and Elijah, but he had not recognised their bodies! (Luke 9v33)

NB: Our Lord's resurrection body was for the purposes of recognition different from His ascended and glorified body, as shown in Rev 1v13-17.

Chapter VII: Eternal Judgement

God having created the Universe, is also responsible for its well-being. He is, therefore, the judge of all His creatures who possess a moral nature.

He has revealed that this present Creation will pass away and be replaced by a New Heaven and New Earth. There is also in the eternal State to be a Lake of Fire, which was not part of the original creation. (Gen 1v1, Isaiah 65v17, Matt 24v35, Rev 20v11-21v8)

While God, as Judge, is constantly passing judgments upon His creatures, e.g., at the Flood or Nineveh, yet these judgments are temporary and may be revised or revoked, as justice or mercy dictate. There are, however, before the eternal state begins two inexorable judgments which must be universally passed:

(a) The Judgment of whether a person is to exist eternally in the Kingdom of God or in the Lake of Fire.

(b) The Judgment of where in that vast Kingdom of the New Heaven and Earth each one whose name is in the Book of Life is to be placed; whether in Heaven or Earth, and in what position in either. These Judgments, once passed, are unalterable. (Gen 6v7, Jonah 1v2, Jer 18v7,10, Matt 11v21-24, Rev 20v11-15, Mark 16v16, Luke 19v11-27, Heb 12v17)

Originally Heaven was created for Angels and earth for men; but the passage of time and the intrusion of sin have brought about modifications in the original structure. The number of those who dwelt in Heaven and shared in its government has been greatly depleted by the rebellion of Satan and his Angels. God has revealed that it is not His intention to create more Angels to take their places; but, instead, to choose from amongst men those who might become His Sons by adoption, and hold a place higher than that ever offered to Angels, so that Jesus Christ would not be ashamed to call them brethren. (Rev 12v7-9, 21v7, Heb 2v5-18)

Every Christian, being begotten again by the Spirit of God, has this Heavenly calling by right of inheritance; it is his natural development from a babe in Christ to a full-grown Son of God. Yet it is an inheritance which has to be won, and may be forfeited by incompetence; for God cannot put responsibility and honour upon those who are manifestly unable to bear it. (Eph 1v5-11, 4v13, Rom 8v14-19, Phil 3v13-21, Heb 3v1)

The gift of God to His children is their eternal life, and the only qualification for this is faith in Christ, however slight; but God is leading many Sons to glory, if they will come His Way. Glory is something which cannot be given, it must be won. It is a faith, which has stood the trials of life victoriously, an overcoming faith, which will alone be found to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. There is the possibility of being ashamed from Him at His coming because we have been disobedient or idle or lukewarm. (Heb 2v10, 12v17, 1Pet 1v7, 2Tim 4v6-8, James 1v12, Rev 3v16, 1John 2v28)

The headmaster of a school may give all the pupils a holiday, but he cannot give all the first prize, or, indeed, any prize at all. It is the essence of a prize that its winner has accomplished some feat which has marked him out from his brethren. He has written a better essay or run a faster race than the others, and so has gained a position of honour. The whole value of the prize is that it is the badge of achievement. Glory is that feeling of respect that rises

in the minds of men when they hear of what you have done. Even Christ was moved to admiration of the believing centurion and the poor widow woman. (Matt 8v10, Luke 21v3-4)

So far as a Christian is concerned the first of these Judgments, that is, of Life or Death, is passed at his new birth; he then has eternal life, and nothing and nobody can deprive him of it: for God will not allow anything too powerful for him to come against him. So long, therefore, as he continues to believe in Christ he is justified by faith and a member of God's Kingdom. (John 5v24, 10v27-29, 1Cor 10v13, Rom 4v5, 5v1, 1Pet 1v5)

It is possible that he himself may throw away the gift that was his, and commit spiritual suicide. But this will need the most determined effort and continuous rebellion on his part, and be as unnatural as is physical suicide. There is, of course, nothing that can ever take away from man his freedom of choice; there is a backsliding which knows no repentance, a final shipwreck of faith. (James 5v20, 2Pet 2v20-22, Jude 12, 1Tim 1v19, 6v9, Heb 6v6, 10v26, 1John 5v16-17, Phil 3v18,19, 1Chron 10v13,14)

NB: There are two touchstones by which every theological dogma may be tested. The first, that God is Love (1John 4v16); the second, that man's will is free, though not necessarily his actions (Luke 13v34, Gal 5v17)

Rom 7 gives us a vivid picture of a man whose will is set upon righteousness, but whose actions are forced upon him by habitual sin in the flesh. The drunkard, the drug addict are obvious examples of this pitiful condition.

And, on the other hand, the old lag in the cell gives us an illustration of the exact opposite. Here we have a man whose will is all for evil, but whose actions are forced into a blameless mould of stone breaking or oakum picking, such as a saint might copy!

Men have always feared the responsibility which attaches to free will, and longed to believe that God can do something which will relieve us from the burden. Yet the truth remains that although God is Love and will secure us from all outside aggression or internal decay, yet even He is not master of men's wills but only of their actions. Were He so, all would be saved; for He is not willing that any should perish: but the decision of salvation or destruction is man's own decision; and his only eternal security lies in his eternal determination to obey God. It is man's spirit, not his soul, which is born again. His soul, adopted out of his earthly family and introduced into his heavenly family, may yet hanker after the old home and bring God to a dreadful decision. For God having saved a people out of Egypt, after destroyed them that believed not, and they knew God's breach of promise. It is unfortunately true that there are those who by their own choice and with determination have repeated their original transgression, and are therefore twice dead. (Heb 10v26) For the soul that once received a living spirit from the Almighty can also kill it, and again plunge into the darkness from which it once emerged. (2Pet 2v20-22, Jude v5-12, Num 14v34, Heb 3v12-4v2)

On the other hand, while the Christian is sure of Eternal Life, he is not sure of glory. The reward of the Christian is to be allowed to share with His Lord in the Eternal government of His Kingdom; in a word the faithful servant is, as always, rewarded by more work and higher responsibility!

The Judgment of Christians for position in the Kingdom will take place at the Lord's return before the Millennium. All who appear thereat are assured of life in the Kingdom; it is only their position in the Kingdom that is at stake. Full accounts are given of this Judgment that no one may have any misunderstanding in the matter. Verdicts will range from "Well done good and faithful servant" to "Thou wicked servant," from being entrusted with all that belongs to God, to being deprived of what is rightfully one's own, from joy in the Lord's Presence, to being bound hand and foot and cast out of it. Those Christians who have proved by their lives on earth that they are unfit to rule over it, will have to wait in darkness till they can be found a place upon the New Earth, where maybe some faithful servant of the Old Testament will find himself exalted to take his inheritance amongst the Brethren and to rule over him for his good. The Lord has clearly spoken of the weeping and gnashing of teeth amongst those of His children, who, too late, find that they have forfeited the blessing they despised, and must content themselves with second best for Eternity. (Cf. Ezek 44v10-14.)

It is madness to imagine that because we are Sons of God we shall automatically inherit the Government: to forget the "if" of Rom 8v17. We may be Sons who cause shame, who cannot be rightfully entrusted with even the slightest responsibility upon earth, whose lives cause shame to the Family, and are a stumbling block to the world. The greater the responsibility the higher the standard!

The Biblical illustration is the contrast between Abraham sharing God's secrets upon the mountain top, and Lot drinking himself drunk in a lonely cave; both saved, but worlds between them! (Gen 18v17, 19v30) When an Apostle runs his hardest, we may well determine to do our best! (1Cor 9v24-27, Phil 3v10-15) The rationale of this Judgment of the Sons of God by the Son of God is that the Government of the earth during the Millennium is to be in the hands of Christ and His Brethren, who will take the place of Satan and his Angels, who will have been cast out

of their thrones in the heavenlies. It is necessary, therefore, for this Judgment to precede the setting up of the Millennial Kingdom. (Matt 25v14-30, Luke 12v31-48, 16v1-12, 19v11-27, Rom 8v17, 1Cor 3v10-15, 2Cor 5v9-10, Heb 2v3, 12v16,17,23, Rev 3v11, Prov 17v2, 29v21)

The Great White Throne

There remains, however, the final Judgment Throne of God at the close of the Millennium, at which will appear all the dead of all the ages, including Angels and demons as well as men. Here again, the first question to be decided is that of Life or Death. Will one be in the Kingdom or in the Lake of Fire? And therefore the Book of Life is opened. (Rev 20v11-15, Jude v6, 2Pet 2v4)

NB: The present course of events upon this earth is most deceptive to the natural mind. God in His mercy, though He condemns instantly every work of evil, does not immediately execute His sentence, but waits to see if His forbearance will lead the sinner to repentance. Unfortunately, so hard are the hearts of many sinners that this very forbearance only emboldens them in their wickedness, as was the case with Pharaoh, who was hardened by God's repeated forgiveness, till he lost all fear of God's justice. God's children are often perplexed when they see the wicked apparently unscathed, and themselves chastened! Calvary, however, has shown us in one glaring example God's real estimate of sin. The soul that sinneth it shall die, and Christ died therefore for the doomed. God's wrath is indeed mounting up steadily, till it shall be revealed at the Day of the Lord and the Great White Throne. (Psalm 73, Eccles 8v11, Isaiah 26v10, Rom 2v4-9, 9v17,18,22, Rev 6v16-17)

It has often been hastily assumed that all who appear at this Judgment are lost; but there is, of course, no scripture to support this, and a moment's reflection will show that it cannot possibly be so; for at this Judgment will appear those who have been born during the Millennium as well as those who have either rejected or never heard of God's salvation, and the great assembly of Angels and demons who have been waiting for the execution of sentence uttered long ago. It will, indeed, be a mixed company. The Book simply says, "And if any man was not found written in the Book of Life, he was cast into the Lake of Fire," and in Rev 21v8 it gives a description of the characters of such. (Matt 25v41, 2Pet 2v4, Jude 6)

It is a scene of unimaginable solemnity. Here upon the brink of eternity are gathered a vast concourse of beings to hear a verdict, which will carry with it their eternal fate. The Judgment, we are told, will be in the hands of the Royal Family, every member of which will have passed through the temptations of life and know the infirmities of human nature. At their head will be the Son of God, who took our nature upon Him that He might be qualified to perform this very duty. The Judgment will be in the hands of Him, who is not willing that any should perish. (1Cor 6v2-3, Dan 7v22, Rev 20v4, John 5v27)

Why then in face of this loving mercy of God, will there be any who throughout eternity will know no alleviation of their pain? Eternal punishment is not the retribution for the sins that men have committed in the past—it is neither vindictive nor remedial nor punitive. It is, however, the only safeguard against the sins which the finally unrepentant intend to go on committing for eternity if left at liberty. Eternal punishment is God's answer to eternal sin: and the responsibility for it lies, not with God, but with the soul that is set upon sin, scorns mercy, and would gladly destroy the happiness of others for his own base ends. (Acts 17v31, 1Tim 2v4, 2Pet 3v9, Mark 3v29 (R.V.))

The Lake of Fire is the second death: i.e., it is the second time a man loses his body. The first time was because God had taken away the Tree of Life after Adam's sin: the second time is because of his own sin. On both occasions it is torment; the first time temporary, the second time eternal. God cannot prevent a free will desiring to do evil, but He can and will prevent it doing it. This He will do by depriving them of their bodies, without which they can do nothing. The ruin and anguish of those in Hell is irremediable and eternal, and rests solely upon the truth that it is impossible to renew them to repentance, and so make them fit to live with others.

It is as if a father had given his son a penknife that with it he might be enabled to do all sorts of needful things, only to find that instead the boy is cutting things up just to suit himself, and spoiling other people's property. That boy could, if he refused to listen to admonition and warning and continued in his folly, force his father to take away the knife, lest others should be inconvenienced. A razor is a good thing for shaving; but when used for cutting throats it is always confiscated! The Lord pointed out that disembodiment was a ceaseless torment allowing of no rest; so that even a swine's body was better than none, allowing its tenants to do at least one more act of senseless destruction. (Rev 20v14, 21v8, Gen 3v22-24, Heb 6v6, 10v26, Dan 7v11, Luke 16v19-31, Matt 10v28, Luke 8v32,33, 11v24)

NB: It is perhaps worth pointing out here that the parable of Dives and Lazarus is a physical picture of the suffering or peace of the souls of the departed. Dives' body was not actually being burned: it was in the grave where it had been buried: nor was Lazarus actually reclining on Abraham's bosom. That was the ordinary Jewish description of the destiny of the believing dead, i.e., with faithful Abraham awaiting the resurrection in faith.

Hades was the place of departed souls not of dead bodies. In the same way the bodies of those destroyed by the Lord at His coming will lie in the Valley of Gehenna: their souls will be in Hades, just as our Lord's body was in the tomb while His soul was suffering the pains of death in Hades. (Isaiah 66v24, Luke 16v22, Acts 2v24-31, John 11v24)

The torment of Hell will not in any sense be vindictive; God will not needlessly afflict even the wicked, nor add to their pain any unnecessary suffering. The awful truth is that their endless pain will be absolutely unavoidable, and spring from the fact that never again will they be free to do anything: since all they desire to do is evil. They will spend eternity in fruitless remorse and hatred of God and each other and the whole creation; yet in the mercy of God not able to inflict physical torment even on each other. Their souls wrapped round in endless lying pride they will refuse to admit their own guilty folly and will instead throw the blame for their awful condition upon a long-suffering Judge, whose love and mercy they spurn and whose every act they treat with suspicion and hatred. To come to the place where you cannot even trust the Almighty, and see a trap in His every word, and throw a doubt upon His every promise, is the last darkness of despair, from which there is no deliverance.

It has been said that not only must justice be done, it must also appear to be done; lest there should be any possibility of doubt about the righteousness of it. There are always those who feel that surely punishment will bring repentance. God has lovingly safeguarded us against this by leaving Satan in prison for the Millennium and then allowing him to come out. We shall then see that he is at once at his old ways of life in hatred and destruction. Hell then is the painful duty, which the unrepentant force upon a long-suffering God. They are hardened, not softened, by forbearance, and His only choice is either to abandon the righteous to the tender mercies of the wicked, or else to bring the wicked to a full stop. He has in His love for the righteous chosen the latter step. (Rev 20v7-9, 19v1-3, Rom 2v4-6, Eccles 8v11, Exodus 4v21)

It is often said that this end would be equally achieved by the annihilation of the wicked. In the first place, the language of Scripture will not allow of such an interpretation. It is torment, not just the smoke of it, which is everlasting. In the second place, the very severity of the penalty will doubtless frighten into the sanity of repentance countless numbers, who would cheerfully have had their fling at the expense of others, if there had been no retribution to be feared. The fear of the Lord may not be the last attitude of wisdom, but it is often the beginning. In the third place, there will likely be many who will be eternally safe because the smoke of Hell, continually ascending in their sight, will play its part in the steeling of their determination to obey God. For the saved will include not only those saved with glory, but also those who are scarcely saved, and only brought to repentance with the greatest difficulty. In the vast Kingdom of God will be vessels to honour, but also to dishonour; yet in the Kingdom. God will save into Eternal Life everyone who can by any manner of means be induced to turn from evil and do good.

Finally, and most important of all, it is the very fact that man is eternal that gives him his importance, and makes him different from the animals. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Let him think of himself as the mere creature of a day, and you prevent him from thinking highly of himself. The evolutionist who tells man that he is but the short-lived head of an animal creation must not be surprised if men live like animals. It is the very fact that man is eternal which gives him dignity, rescues him from the frustration of death, and allows him to live in hope and eternal purpose: the Christian is saved by hope, and in the light of eternity pulls himself together as one whose actions matter, and will have eternal consequences. Deprive man of eternity, and you have but a dying animal. (Rev 20v10, 14v10-11, Isaiah 66v24, 1Pet 4v18, 2Pet 3v9, Jude 23, 2Tim 2v20-21, John 15v22-25, Ezek 18v23)

NB1: It is essential to remember that all who will be in Hell will be there because they hate God without any cause. They would spoil the happiness of Eternity if they could, and they cannot be induced to repent and receive a free pardon and Eternal life. It will be the unreasonable hardness of their own heart, not of God's, which will be responsible for their fearful condition. Yet God will make use of them as an eternal warning to the righteous.

NB2: If it be objected that it had been better for God not to have created at all, with His foreknowledge that the result of so doing would be the creation of Hell as well as Heaven, the answer is:

- (a) That He is in no sense responsible for Hell; it is an unwanted addendum forced upon Him by the wicked,
- (b) That it would be most unfair to deprive the righteous of their happiness, just because some elected to play the fool and preferred misery to happiness, without a cause.

What amazing joy it will be to know that a happy eternity in a glorious place with a loving God and kindly companions is finally assured! No wonder that those who believe the promises of God are exhorted to shout upon their beds! True emotion is the inevitable effect upon the soul of facts. The greater the facts, the greater the emotion. No emotion can be too great in the face of the greatest of all facts, Eternal Life in the Kingdom of God.

The Justice of God

Finally God has laid down in His Book certain lines which He always follows in Judgment. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

- 1) Matt 11v21-24. God will take into account at that day not only what one did, hut what one would have done under happier circumstances. Cp. Matt 10v15, 1Sam 30v21-25.
- 2) John 15:22-25. There is a real sense in which men have not sin until they see and hate God. It is the person who knows it all and yet falls away, who is utterly hopeless. Heb 6v4-8, 10v26-31, 2Peter 2v20-22.
- 3) Matt 10v41-42. A man will he credited with doing the thing with which he sympathised though he had no opportunity himself. It is the intents of the heart which count with God. Cp. Matt 20v6-7.
- 4) Matt 25v31-46. Love for and kindness to any Son of God, will be counted as love and kindness to the unknown Son of God. Cp. Matt 10v40, 18v5.
- 5) Rom 2v11. God is no respecter of persons. All will be treated with scrupulous fairness and generosity. There will be no one in Heaven or Earth through their own righteousness, but all solely through the forgiving mercy of God, who is rich in pity. Cp. James 2v1.
- 6) 1Cor 3v13. Quality, not quantity is God's criterion. Cp. Mark 12v41-44, Luke 16v10.

Chapter VIII: The Cross Of The Lord

The faith whereby the Old Testament saints were justified varied greatly in its content. They had to believe whatever revelation God had made to them. Noah believed the Flood was coming, Abram believed that he was to have a seed; Rahab believed that Jericho would be taken.

The faith whereby a Son of God is justified has however always the same object; it is faith in the death of Jesus as an atonement for sin, and in the resurrection of Jesus as an evidence of God's acceptance of His sacrifice.

This faith is capable of great expansion as the Christian baby grows to maturity. It may begin as a very personal blessing; it will grow to be an event of universal significance. (Rom 3v21-26, 4v23-5v11, 10v9) The central reason for Calvary was that the Law of God might be established in all its awful majesty. The whole success of the Creation depended upon the voluntary obedience of God's creatures to His Law, the Law of Love and Liberty. Anyone who broke the law of unselfishness, and wished to embark upon a life of self-pleasing, could at any time upset the whole loving plan. Therefore, because of the exceedingly dangerous nature of sin, that is, disobedience, God laid down the law that "the soul that sinneth it shall die," because it is too dangerous to be left at large. Indeed, the whole happiness of Eternity will rest upon the unceasing obedience of all in it. (Gen 2v17, Jer 31v30, Ezek 18v4)

The fearful nature of sin, therefore, and its awful consequences had to be burnt in upon every conscience. To do this and so ensure the prosperity of the Ages of the Ages God has taken two steps:

- (a) He has allowed one sin to work itself out to its bitter end, so that all may see and understand the misery of a world in which evil is allowed. (Rom 5v12-21, Isaiah 14v12-13, Ezek 28v15, Gen 3v6)
- (b) He has satisfied the righteous demands of His Law that the death of a sinner is the inevitable result of his sin by sacrificing, not sinners, but their sinless Creator, to establish the inexorability of His Law's decree. No one will enter the Kingdom who has not understood the horrible danger of sin, and made clear to the Almighty his intention never to commit it. By the Cross all hope of escaping the punishment of sin is taken away (no sinner can hope to get away with unrepentant sin). The Law is the custodian of the happiness of Society. Contempt of it brings its inevitable reward. To forgive the sinner without establishing the Majesty of the Law would encourage sin, and render justice impossible. (Isaiah 42v21, Psalm 138v2, Rom 3v21)

The Leprosy of Sin. Leviticus 13

The plague of sin is:

- (a) That successful selfishness at the expense of others tempts them to play the same game, and so fills the earth with violence, and leads to the final triumph of the most unscrupulous, and the servitude of the righteous. (Gen 6v11, Rev 13v3-4)

(b) That the risks of living with those who will take advantage of one are so great as ultimately to force a man into a similar line of evil conduct for mere self preservation. The righteous make themselves the prey of the wicked, (Isaiah 59v15, James 5v6)

(c) That it provokes retaliation from those who are wronged and plants a root of bitterness whose fruit grows more and more bitter with the passage of time. The wheel of nature, when once it has started rolling, is not too easily stopped. Ishmael still despises Isaac, and Esau hates Jacob! (James 3v6)

(d) That when unchecked it advances from evil to evil, until at last there is no part of the soul which is not infected with a perfect selfishness, which knows no repentance and has no regrets, but finds its satisfaction in the torture and misery of others, and in a self-advancement which rises upon the slaughter of its rivals, and plunges its possessor into a ceaseless apprehension of retaliation from its victims. It is the same tree which bears Athaliah and Herod, Nero and Hitler! (Gen 6v5, Prov 4v14-17, Micah 7v1-6)

Meditation upon these awful truths must lead, however, to an ever-increasing understanding of the Love both of God the Father, who laid our sins upon His own Son; and of His Son who delighted to do the Father's will and set us free. This is not the legal but the personal side of Calvary, and reveals to us not simply the inflexible righteousness of God, but also His tender love for each one of His creatures. (John 3v16, Gal 2v20, Rom 5v8)

These two great truths, **(1)** that the wages of sin is death, **(2)** that God has out of love given His own Son to carry our sins in His own body on the tree, were in the mind of God before the Creation; and the revelation of them was given through the prophets of Israel.

Yet although they were plainly stated in the Old Testament, no one believed them or understood them till Jesus came. He believed, but He could not get even His Apostles to agree with Him till after His death and resurrection. They had no fear of punishment for sin; nor any desire that Jesus should die for their Sins. Indeed, they did what they could to prevent Him doing so. They were quarrelling about the positions they would hold in His Kingdom, when the King was realising that unless He died for them they would not be able even to enter that Kingdom. It was His post-resurrection ministry, which explained to them the victory of Calvary. Before that they refused to consider or discuss His death and resurrection; after that, this was the centre of their message, as it has been the centre of the family life ever since. (Rom 6v23, Rev 11v18, 1Pet 1v20, Isaiah 53v11, 1Cor 1v23, Luke 24v25,44,45, 9v45)

The world has always hated such truth; it seems to lay upon them an insupportable burden. Their thought is that free will carries with it liberty to do as they please; and not, as is the truth, liberty to keep the law of God. It has always been the dream of the world that in some way or other universal selfishness could lead to universal happiness; whereas the truth is that universal happiness is the fruit of universal obedience to the Law of Love.

They hated Jesus, therefore, who pointed out this truth, and laid upon man, not God, the responsibility for the world's prosperity. It is the work, however, of all the Sons of God to preach this simple but unwelcome truth, that the happiness of Heaven will depend upon man's obedience and not upon God's power. They, too, must take up daily their cross with all the explanation of it which God has given; that all men may clearly grasp that selfishness will bar them from Heaven and plunge them into Hell; that only Christ could avert from them the doom that is pronounced upon disobedience; that God loves them like His own soul, but that even He can do nothing for them except they turn from sin; that one sin in its outworking is bound to defile and wreck the peace and happiness of a whole society, whether in Heaven or upon earth.

So the study of the Foundation Truths has drawn to its close, leaving us safe in the everlasting arms of the Creator and Redeemer. Continued study will only serve to enlarge our love of God and give us the full assurance of understanding of His heart and mind.

Appendix II: The Disastrous Effects Of Augustine's Doctrine Of 'Original Sin'

Introduction

The Harmful Life and Influence of Bishop Augustine Of Hippo

Bishop Augustine of Hippo (354 AD to 430 AD), put forward as divine "truth" his doctrine of "Original Sin;" in which he states that all humanity is "born in sin," and is born spiritually corrupt and depraved, and, sadly, many in the Church hold this doctrine today. The Devil used three things in Augustine's life, to mould and influence him to form the destructive heresy of "Original Sin," and through him to get it accepted by the Church; they are:

1) His full involvement and association for ten years with the Gnostic cult of Manicheism

This was from approximately 374 to 384 AD Manicheism is based upon cosmogony (an account of how the Universe

came into being) and consists of Zoroastrian Dualism, Babylonian folklore, Buddhist ethics, and additions of Christian elements. **Its Christology was purely Docetic.**

2) The immoral life that Augustine had led

His doctrine of "Original Sin" appears to be an excuse for his former very immoral and profligate life. This made him very open to Satanically inspired doctrines, and the means of introducing them into the Church. This was the very opposite of the godly spiritual basis of the lives of Samuel, John the Baptist, and many other men and women of God in the Scriptures.

3) Augustine's Allegorical Interpretation of the Scriptures

(This rejects, refutes and distorts the literal meaning of Scripture). When you interpret the Scriptures by allegorical explanations you can make them mean almost anything that you want to. The false cults of today employ this very same method to deceive their adherents into following their false theology.

When much of the Church embraced Augustine's doctrine of Original Sin, over a thousand years darkness descended upon it. The outstanding Theologian, Dean E H Plumptre, writes in, "The Spirits In Prison," page 152: "And so the dark shadow of Augustine fell on the theology of the Western church, and condemned its thoughts of the love of God to many centuries of disastrous twilight." End of quote.

During a period of over 1000 years, genuine revivals of the Holy Spirit only occurred very rarely in isolated areas, and they were often extinguished by murderous persecution, by the established Church.

At the time of The Reformation, in the sixteenth century, Martin Luther, who was an Augustinian monk, brought Augustine's theology, including the doctrine of Original Sin, into the Protestant Church. This doctrine continued to create great darkness in the minds of God's people, and this is still the position today in much of the Body of Christ.

NB1 Augustine's monstrous doctrine that unbaptised babies will go to Hell, for ever

Many who believe in Augustine's doctrine of "Original Sin" do not realise the disastrous effect that his doctrine has had on the Church. I am sure that most Christians will strongly disagree with Augustine's monstrous doctrine that every child is "born in sin" and spiritually depraved, and will go to Hell forever, like the very worst sinner, if they are not baptised. This contradicts the Scriptures, which state that God creates our souls and spirits.

NB2 Isaiah 57v16: "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and **the souls which I have made.**" How could God create something sinful? In Heb 12v9, God is called **"the Father of our spirits."** (NIV and Robertson)

NB3 Augustine's theology also does away with free will

It can be briefly summed up as follows. We read on page 317, of "God's Strategy in Human History," by Paul Marston and Roger Forster. "Augustine taught that when Adam sinned, all his descendants sinned *"in"* him and so shared in and inherited the guilt of the act." End of quote.

Someone else has said: "The only way any are saved is by God intervening and choosing some, whom He calls His elect, to be saved. This choosing is totally arbitrary and independent of those chosen. Those thus chosen cannot ever be lost or fall from grace. To the converse, those not arbitrarily chosen before the foundation of the World to everlasting life, are irrevocably doomed to Hell, having absolutely no hope of salvation, regardless of what they do, or do not do." End of quote.

We read on page 307 of "God's Strategy in Human History by Paul Marston and Roger Forster. "Augustine also said that; "Faith itself was an irresistible gift given by God to a few people, whom he had selected on some basis known only to Himself. God could have given it to others had He so chosen. Without God's irresistible gift of faith, no man could perform any good, whether in thought, will, affection, or action." End of quote.

In asserting these appalling lies, Augustine denies the overwhelming evidence of the Scriptures, that mankind possesses a freewill, and that everyone is individually responsible for their own individual actions. His theology has the effect of removing personal responsibility for one's actions and sins.

In addition to all these terrible doctrines, Augustine's doctrine of "Original Sin" has concealed from the Church, many essential truths concerning our Lord's life and ministry, and Christ's great sufferings for us. We will now go on to consider some of the serious, indeed, critical doctrinal errors, which have resulted from Augustine's doctrine of "Original Sin."

Augustine's "Original Sin" has created several serious theological errors

1) Augustine's doctrine of "Original Sin" directly contradicts the Biblical truth about repentance.

When God tells us to repent, it means that we are responsible, and can be blamed for the wrong that we do. The doctrine of "Original Sin" denies that people have the ability to repent, or that they possess free will. It has made people feel that they are not personally responsible for their sins, and that they cannot help sinning, because they are born sinners. They have been taught that they have inherited a sin nature from Adam, and cannot live right because of that. **However, this is not what God says; God commands us to repent of our sins, and tells us that we can help sinning, and need not have committed any sins.** God does not say that we cannot help sinning, He says that repentance that brings forth the fruit of a holy life, is the way to obtain forgiveness, and acceptance with Him. Those who hide behind the bush of "Original Sin" as an excuse for their sins, are in reality blaming God for making them so. **If we could not help sinning because of inherited sin, then we could not be blamed for our sins, or told to repent.** However, God does say that we can help sinning, and commands everyone everywhere to repent. Acts 17v30. The theme of repentance is seen in all the Scriptures. See Ezek 18v30. etc.

In Rom 1v18-32, Paul castigates the holding down the truth of the revelation of God through creation. This has resulted in the most deplorable wickedness and immorality. **In Rom 1v20, Paul states that mankind is "without an excuse," anapologetos," (Strong's NT:379), only here and Rom2v1, "inexcuseable."** Mankind has rejected both the revelation of God's eternal power and deity in Creation, and the light of their own conscience. God has manifested Himself **"to and in mankind,"** but mankind's determined wickedness has meant that God has had to give them up to their evil ways. Mankind does not have any excuse for their sin, and that includes the excuse of the doctrine of "Original Sin." Rom 1v19,20,24,26,28.

Paul tells us in Acts 17v30,31, that God commands everyone to repent
This means that everyone could have lived righteous lives, even with the limited light that they have had. We read, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but **now commands all men everywhere to repent,** because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." **See Acts 20v21. "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."** See also Acts 26v20.

In John 1v9, we read that Jesus illumines every child that is born. "Illumines," is "photizei" the present active indicative of "photizo" (Strong NT:5461); which means, to shed rays, to light up, to illumine. **Thayer** adds, "to enlighten, spiritually, to imbue with saving knowledge." The present tense shows that this is a continuous present tense action, and not a brief or temporary act. We should accept what Jesus said in Matt 18v1-10 and 19v14, that children are fit for Heaven, and are like the inhabitants of Heaven. God declares in Isaiah 53v6, that mankind is not "born astray," but has **"gone astray."** Paul confirms this in Rom 7v9, where he states that he was born spiritually alive to God, and that he died spiritually when he personally sinned. Paul again states this fact in Rom 3v12, **"They are all gone out of the way,** they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Note well. In Psalm 51v5, it is David's mother who is the sinner not David. "In sin did **my mother** conceive me."

Repentance was the theme of the preaching of John the Baptist: Mark 1v4 states: "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." Matt 3v8: "Therefore produce fruits worthy of repentance." Matt 3v11: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Luke 3v3: "And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." Acts 13v24: "When John had first preached before His coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel."

Repentance was a major theme of the preaching of our Lord Jesus
It was a vital part of the good news of the Gospel. Mark 1v14,15: Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: **repent ye,** and believe the gospel. See Luke 13v3,5: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Matt 9v13: "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Luke 5v32: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The risen Saviour states that repentance was to be preached to all nations. Luke 24v46,47: "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: **And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."**

The early Church preached repentance from dead works
The early Church preached that repentance was the essential prerequisite before people could experience forgiveness of sins. We read in Acts 2v38: "Then Peter said unto them, **Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."**

See Acts 3v19,20: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you."

Both Jews and Gentiles must repent. Acts 5v31: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for **to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.**" "**Repentance unto life**" was also granted to the Gentiles, we read in Acts 11v18: "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath **God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.**"

God desires to save all, we read in 2Pet 3v9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is **longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**"

Paul informs us in Acts 17v30,31, that God "commands all men everywhere to repent."

"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, **but now commands all men everywhere to repent**, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

See Acts 20v21: "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, **repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.**"

See Acts 26v19,20: "Therefore, King Agrippa, **I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared** first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then **to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.**"

See Rom 2v4: "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, **not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?**"

We read in 2Cor 7v9,10: "Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For **godly sorrow produces repentance** leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death."

Note well 2Tim 2v25,26: "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; **if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;** And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." See Heb 6v1-9.

Mankind often despises and rejects God's great mercy with fearful consequences: Rom 2v3-6. "And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? **Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?** But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart, you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who "will render to each one according to his deeds."

Jesus told most of the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 that they needed to repent

The Church at Ephesus is told to repent. Rev 2v5: "Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place."

The Church at Pergamos is told to repent. Rev 2v16: "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."

The Church at Sardis is told to repent. Rev 3v2,3: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you."

The Church at Laodicea is told to repent. Rev 3v19,20: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."

The Church at Thyatira is told to repent. This we will consider in more detail, as it is relevant to our study. Jesus gives the most solemn and serious warnings to the Church at Thyatira about their immorality and idolatry. **We read in Rev 2v18-29:** "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has

eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. Nevertheless, I have a few things against you, **because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.**" NKJV

"But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known **the deep things of Satan**, as they call them — I place no other burden on you. Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. And **he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations**; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." NASB

Adam Clark writes of Rev 2v20: "Instead of, that woman Jezebel, "ten gunaika Iezabel," many excellent MSS., and almost all the ancient versions, read "ten gunaika sou Iezabel," "THY WIFE Jezebel;" which intimates, indeed asserts, that this bad woman was the wife of the Bishop of the church, and his criminality in suffering her was therefore the greater. This reading Griesbach has received into the text." End of quote.

Hodges and Farstad, state that the Majority Text reads "ten gunaika sou," thy wife." The A.V. and T.R. reading of, "that woman," "ten gunaika," is based on Me, Aleph, C, the Critical Texts; the Old Latin; the Vulgate; the Coptic Sahidic and Bohairic; the Armenian and Ethiopic versions, the Church fathers, Tertullian, Ambrosiaster, Tyconius, Epiphanius, Haymo, and the bav commentary of Andrew. However, most manuscripts add "sou," and read, "ten gunaika sou," "thy wife;" the evidence for this is found in Hodges and Farstad, many miniscules (Mabcd), B,Q, the Syrian Philoxenian and Harklean; the Church fathers, Cyprian; Primasius; Andrew's a, c, and p commentaries; and Arethas; Codex A adds "sou ten." Jezebel was the wife of Ahab, Israel's king; this suggests that Jezebel was the pastor's wife.

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown's Commentary state, "That woman. So 'Aleph C, Vulgate; but A B, 'THY wife.' The symbolical, Jezebel was to Thyatira what Jezebel, Ahab's 'wife,' was to him."

The Expositor's Greek Testament states, "The well attested "sou" after "gunaika" (A,Q, miniscules, Syriac, Arethas, Primasius, etc., so Grot., Al., Zahn, and J.Weiss)." End of quote. Even though most manuscripts add "sou," and read, "ten gunaika sou," "thy wife;" Expositors says, "it is to be omitted," preferring the evidence I have just stated above for "ten gunaika," "that woman."

Bishop Christopher Wordsworth includes "ten gunaika sou," in his Greek text, and writes that "thy wife, is found in A, B, (not in Aleph), and many Cursives, and in the Syriac Version, and in Andreas and Arethas, Cyprian and Primasius, and is received by Scholz, Lachman, and Tischendorf." **End of quote.**

Being the wife of the leader of the Church, this Jezebel, like the wife of Ahab, exercised great influence over her husband. An influence which she consistently exercised for evil in the realm of false teaching and false prophecy, that seduced people into immorality and idolatry, these were the sins of the historical Jezebel. See 2Kings 9v22,30. This Jezebel called herself a prophetess, (the false apostles of Rev 2v2, likewise, were not what they claimed to be). Jezebel's claims that her teaching was from God, was totally false. **Jesus did not say that Jezebel was to be excused because she was "born in sin," and had "Original Sin."** Jesus gave this evil woman space to repent, but warned that without repentance He would execute Jezebel and her followers. Nor did Paul say that the Corinthians who lived bad lives could not help sinning because they had "Original Sin" and were "born in sin." Paul states that many of them were sick and many had died because of their sinfulness; being judged and chastened by Jesus, to save them from being condemned with the world. 1Cor 11v28-32. Solemn words indeed! Repent or else! However, even in this sinful Church, there is real hope for those who truly want to walk with God. Our dear Lord promises that those who overcome will reign with Him, and rule over the nations of the world in the Millennium.

A.T. Robertson writes on "Rev 2v24. "The deep things of Satan," "ta bathea tou Satana." The Ophites (worshippers of the serpent) and other later Gnostics (Cainites, Carpocratians, Naassenes) boasted of their knowledge of "the deep things," some claiming this very language about Satan (the serpent) as Paul did of God (1Cor 2v10.) Some even claimed that they could indulge in immorality without sinning (1John 1v10, 3v10.) **"As they say," "hos legousin."** Probably referring to the heretics who ridicule the piety of the other Christians." End of quote.

Like the above Gnostics, Jezebel and her followers abandoned themselves to fleshly sins, and claimed a "divine

revelation" for it, and indulged in "the deep things of Satan." The Gnostics boasted of a special knowledge of "the depths" of divine things. They perverted the truths of Paul. See Rom 11v33, 1Cor 2v10. Their arrogant title, "Gnostics," means "full of knowledge." God declares their so-called "depths of knowledge," are really "depths of Satan;" just as in Rev 2v9, God calls 'the synagogue of God,' which opposed and persecuted Christians, "the synagogue of Satan." Beware of the, "Know it Alls," who pervert the correct interpretation of Scripture, like Augustine did, with his doctrine of "Original Sin."

In James 5v14-18, we see that repentance and confession of sin and persistent prolonged prayer may often be necessary to experience Divine healing in the Churches. 'Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit." Elijah's persistent prolonged prayer is our example.

The second attack of the doctrine of "Original Sin" is even more serious than its twisted and evil view of repentance, for it attacks the glorious character of God, and the person and humanity of Jesus.

2) Augustine's doctrine of "Original Sin" attacks the character and justice of God

The teaching of "Original Sin" has turned the theology about God on its head. God is Love, and His first name is Compassion. 1John 4v8, Exodus 34v6,7. However, Augustine's doctrine of "Original Sin" has made God to be an unjust evil Despot, who does Satanic-like acts; for Augustine said that God sends innocent babies, who have not been baptised, into Hell forever, to share the same fate as the very worst sinner. This terrible Satanically inspired lie has devastating effects on a Christian's perception of God, and their walk with God. Augustine's doctrine of "Original Sin" is responsible for a great deal of the darkness in the minds of both believers and unbelievers about God, and has greatly hindered the knowledge of the truth about God's wonderful character. **When a Christian accepts Augustine's doctrine of "Original Sin" as truth, it destroys their ability to perceive the truth about Jesus being a compassionate, sympathetic and faithful Great High Priest, who is the "Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith."** Heb 12v2.

In addition to the above appalling doctrine; the God who Augustine presents, is looked upon as a bundle of contradictions. This conclusion is arrived at in the mind of the believer in the following way: The believer thinks, "How can God ask me to live a righteous life, when I have been "born in sin," and can't help sinning, because I was created badly; and then He condemns me for my sins, which I cannot help doing." This seems, and is, both illogical and unjust. Thank God, this is not true! It is a lie of the Devil.

3) Augustine's "Original Sin" attacks Christ's humanity and brings Docetism into the Church

Augustine's doctrine of "Original Sin" disastrously affects the doctrine of the person and humanity of Jesus Christ our Lord, and brings Docetic Gnosticism back into Church doctrine. The Docetic Gnostic heresy, which denied Christ's true humanity, is automatically generated in the minds of believers who accept and believe the doctrine of Original Sin, in the following way. Believers conclude that if we have been "born in sin," with sinful natures, which compel us to do evil; and since Jesus was without sin, He obviously did not possess this same sinful nature, so then He **MUST** have had a different kind of "humanity" to us. So the thought arises in the believer's mind, that the humanity of Jesus was different from theirs. Thus, in a very subtle and cunning disguise, the destructive heresy of Docetic Gnosticism has come into the Church, and has corrupted the theology about the humanity of Jesus.

I have heard preachers say, based on Acts 20v28, that the blood of Jesus was the blood of God and not human blood. This is a total denial of the humanity of Christ, and in a very subtle and cunning disguise, is the destructive heresy of Docetic Gnosticism. This heresy arose in the Church in the later half of the First Century AD, and Paul, in his letters to the Philippians, Colossians and 1Timothy, and John, in his Gospel, and First and Second Epistles, write very strongly against this heresy. The doctrine of "Original Sin," revives, in a cunning way, the Docetic Gnostic heresy of the early Church. And from Augustine's time, many Christians have not recognised the doctrine of "Original Sin" for what it is, a destructive Satan inspired heresy! John says that those who deny the true humanity of Jesus are, "Not of God."

In 1John 4v2, "That Jesus Christ is come in the flesh," "come," is "eleluthota," (Strong's NT:2046), the perfect active participle of "erchomai," (Strong's NT:2064), to come; to appear. The perfect tense indicates that Christ's coming in the flesh was a well-known established fact, and that the effects of Christ's incarnation are an abiding reality. Jesus was not a Docetic phantom, He had a human body, and as Paul states in Rom 1v3, "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh."

The same words, "en" (Strong's NT:1722), "sarki" (Strong's NT:4561), "eleluthota" (Strong's NT:2064), "is come in

the flesh," occur again, in 1John 4v3, and the apostle **John declares that everyone who states that Jesus has not come in the flesh, "is not of God," "ek tou Theou ouk estin," literally, "is not out of God."** The apostle **John goes on to state that those who deny the humanity of Jesus have the spirit of Antichrist, and are influenced by super-human evil angelic spirits.** (Some reject the reading, "is come in the flesh," here in 1John 4v3, because these words are omitted by A, B, and a few cursives, **However they are included** in Aleph, G, K, Phi, and most cursives, and the following versions, the Syriac, the Polyglot Arabic, Aethiopic, Coptic, Armenian, and Vulgate; and are recognised by Polycarp, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Ambrose, Ps-Oecumenius, Theophylact, and Augustine.) The opponents of Christ's incarnation, and his passion, would be delighted to see these words omitted from the Scriptures.

Those who believe in "Original Sin" will find many of the truths contained in two of the most important books of the New Testament, Romans and Hebrews, impossible to comprehend. Understanding Paul's letter to the Hebrews is based upon a correct knowledge of our Lord's true humanity, and that Jesus and the believer share exactly the same kind of humanity. Failure to grasp this, means that the believer cannot comprehend our Lord as their sympathetic Great High Priest. This truth is a part of the doctrine of "repentance from dead works," etc., in Heb 5v12 to 6v12, which is "the doctrine of the first principles of Christ," ASV, "the basic teaching about Christ," Heb 6v1, NRSV, "the first principles of the oracles of God." Heb 5v12. KJV. To get the doctrine about Jesus wrong destroys the Christian's foundation.

A correct knowledge of the truth of our Lord's humanity, and other vital truths about Him, is essential for Christians in the last days of this age, the Age of Grace. We will need to know our Lord as our Great High Priest as well as our Saviour, to enable us to overcome the appalling evil conditions that will come upon the world during the last three and a half years of this age, known as "The Great Tribulation." **We need to know that Jesus was indeed, "tempted in ALL points like as we are, yet without sin" during His hidden years at Nazareth, and during His Ministry, in a humanity exactly like our own.** The knowledge of His tried humanity will strengthen and equip us for the evil last days. This is vital truth. Through His Intercessions and High Priestly ministry, Jesus will keep, guard, protect and strengthen us "in soul," and give us victory and bring us through this terrible time. At the sounding of the last trumpet, we shall rise to meet Him in the air at His Second Advent, immediately after the tribulation of those days.

It is certainly not without reason that Paul, in writing to Timothy in 1Timothy 3v16, states the vital truth that, "God was manifest in the flesh," and then immediately in the next verse, 1Timothy 4v1, goes on to state; "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils!" Paul knew that the destructive heresy of Docetic Gnosticism would still be in the Church in the last days and so he warns us against it, by stating that our Lord Jesus did indeed, "come in the flesh," and had a humanity like our own. The doctrine of "Original Sin" attacks the humanity of Christ, and the end result of this attack will be apostasy, Paul says, the effect will be that "some will depart from the faith."

4) Augustine's doctrine of "Original Sin" attacks Christ's High Priestly Ministry

This Docetic heresy attacks both the earthly ministry of Jesus, and His High Priestly Ministry, for if the humanity of Jesus was not exactly like ours, how can He really be our compassionate, sympathetic and faithful Great High Priest. We cannot know Jesus as our perfect example, because the doctrine of "Original Sin" has created the following mindset in Christians; that if we are "born in sin," then our Lord **MUST** have had a different humanity from us, because He was sinless. **So Augustine's theology largely veils Christ's sympathetic, compassionate and faithful Great High Priestly ministry.** The doctrine of "Original Sin" has resulted in many of the great truths in the book of Hebrews being "hidden" from the minds of Christians, because of the failure to understand the true humanity of Jesus. It is also essential for Christians to grasp and understand Paul's doctrine of "dead sin in the flesh," **(Please see Appendix L: Paul's Doctrine Of 'Dead Sin In The Flesh')** which is part of the first foundation truth, "repentance from dead works," which is found in Heb 5v12-6v3, "the first principles of the oracles of God," the principles of the doctrine of Christ." See also, Rom 7v8-8v3. **(Please also see Appendix P: Foundation Truths)**

NB1 If we fail to know Jesus as our Great High Priest, we remain spiritually immature

This can affect the whole of our lives. It is **only** by going through temptation, trials and testing with our Lord that godly "character" is produced in us, and through trials God brings our faith to Christian "perfection," or better, Christian maturity. Heb 6v1. However, if we do not know Him as High Priest, He is hindered from taking us through the trials and tests that He desires to take us through, to give us a vital experimental knowledge of His High Priestly Ministry. Always remember, God will not try and tempt us beyond what we can bear. James 1v2-4,12, Rom.5v1-5, 1Cor 10v13, Heb 12v2.

NB2 If our "house" is not built upon truth as revealed in the Scripture, it will fall

If we do not have the correct, soul-nourishing doctrine about Jesus, when times of temptation, testing and trial come along, our house will "fall." Matt 7v24-27. We will also fail to come through our stormy times of life

victoriously, and will fall by the wayside. Luke 8v5-8,11-15. Jesus emphasised that we have to eat His flesh and drink His blood, or we have no life in us, this is again emphasised in Hebrews 2, which emphasises, the need to realise the true humanity of Christ. See John 6v51-58.

NB3 Many of the vital truths in the book of Romans will not be fully understood

We will badly fail to understand Rom 7v7 to 8v4 (esp. Rom 7v14-25) if we interpret it as Paul's **POST-conversion** experience, instead of his **PRE-conversion** experience. Paul states that he was "carnal, sold under sin". Rom 7v14. However, Paul has just written in Rom 6v6, where he categorically states, "knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." **NB Rom 8v1-4.**

In Rom 7v7 to 8v4, Paul teaches that he, like his Lord, were both born with, "dead sin in the flesh;" however, unlike his Lord, Paul, like everybody else, had yielded to this temptation from sin in the flesh, (from the sinful desires of the flesh), and Paul, like everyone else, had died spiritually as a result of yielding to this temptation. Whereas his Lord had resisted every temptation and conquered them, and thus had "condemned sin in the flesh." Rom 8v3. This vital truth of the Lord's true humanity is also clearly stated by Paul in Heb 2v17,18. and 4v14-16, where he states that Jesus was "**made like unto His brethren in ALL THINGS,**" and was, as a result, "**tempted in ALL points tempted like we are.**"

Pre-Augustinian Teaching.

NB4 The pre-Augustinian theological tradition is practically of one voice AGAINST Augustine's theology, they assert the freedom of the human will. Three recurrent ideas are in their teaching:

- 1) They say that freewill is a gift given to man by God – for nothing can be independent of God.
- 2) They say that the rejection of freewill is the view of heretics.
- 3) They say that man possesses freewill, because he is made in God's image, and God has freewill.

However Augustine saw fit to introduce the doctrine of the "Irresistible Gift of Faith," (or irresistible gift of grace), this false doctrine of Augustine, conquered and corrupted much of the Church.

5) Augustine's doctrine of "Original Sin" attacks Christ's remarkable Faith and Ministry. Jesus did all His miracles by believing what the Father revealed to Him, and He did them at the Father's direction and with the Father's power. Another terrible consequence of believing the doctrine of "Original Sin" and "Born in Sin" theories, is that many Christians have come to believe that the signs, wonders and miracles, that the Lord Jesus did during His earthly ministry were done by Him turning on His Divine power, and simply doing them at his own desire. However, nothing could be further from the truth.

Our Lord states in John 5v19,20,30, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. " **I can do nothing on My own initiative.** As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." See John.14v10., "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but **the Father who dwells in Me does the works.**"

Paul tells us in Phil 2v7, that at the Incarnation, Jesus, "made Himself of no reputation." (NKJV)

Other translations are as follows: - **Revised Standard Version:** "Emptied himself."

Amplified Bible: "Stripped Himself." **The Living Bible:** "Laid aside His mighty power and glory."

TEV: "He gave up all He had." **Lightfoot:** "He stripped Himself of the insignia of majesty,"

"Made Himself of no reputation" in the Greek is "heauton ekenosen", literally translated means, "emptied Himself" of His Omnipotence, Omniscience, Omnipresence, Transcendence and Immutability, i.e. His Divine abilities. But after the "emptying" He still continued to be God, as v 6 states, "being in the form of God," "huparchon en morphe Theou," "being" is "huparchon", the present active participle of "huparcho," ("existing" is a better translation of the Greek) which denotes that what He was before the Incarnation (i.e. God) He continued to be after it, God, but God "emptied."

So we see that it was impossible for the Lord Jesus to use His Divine abilities to do the miracles, because He "emptied Himself" of all His power and glory at the Incarnation. Paul then continues to tell us

in Phil 2v7,8, that after Had "emptied" Himself, He then was: "taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man." (NKJV).

A.T. Robinson gives the following helpful comments on Christ's emptying in Phil 2v7,8:

"The form of a servant", Greek, 'morphen doulou', He took the characteristic attributes ('morphen' as in v6) of a slave. His humanity was as real as His Deity." End of quote

"In the likeness of men", Greek, en homoiomati anthropon", It was a likeness, but a real likeness (Kennedy), no mere phantom humanity as the Docetic Gnostics held. Note the difference in tense between 'huparchon' (eternal existence in the 'morphe' of God) and 'genomenos' (second aorist middle participle of 'ginomai,' becoming, definite entrance in time upon his humanity)." End of quote

"Being found in appearance as a man," Greek, "schemati heuretheis hos anthropos", "in appearance" is in Greek, "schemati", and refers to that which is purely outward and appeals to the senses, "the outward guise" as it appealed to the sense of mankind, His outward guise was altogether human.

In Phil 2v5-11, Paul refutes the Docetic Gnostic theory that Jesus had no human body and the Cerinthian Gnostic teaching that the aeon Christ came upon and used the man Jesus, and that they were two separate beings. In 1John 4v1-6, John states that the denial of the humanity of Jesus by the Gnostics was the spirit of antichrist. Jesus had a real humanity as well as a true deity.

The Lord Jesus came into the world like any other child; He spent 40 weeks in the womb of Mary, and then was born in Bethlehem. The Lord Jesus having "emptied Himself" of His wisdom and knowledge at the time of the Incarnation, had to then learn it all again, and this He did as Luke tells us in Luke 2v40,52: "And the Child grew and became strong in spirit (Majority Text), filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.... And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men." (NKJV)

Jesus had to learn, develop and become spiritually strong just like any other child. The phrase "became strong in spirit" is the exact phrase that is used of the spiritual development of John Baptist. Luke 1v80.

In John 2v1-11, we see an interesting insight into Christ's hidden years at Nazareth.

In v3, it states: "And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." (NKJV). ("They have no wine," in Greek is, "Oionon ouk echousin.") The reaction of Jesus shows that this was not just a statement of fact, and that Mary was in reality making a request for a miracle. Mary's statement speaks volumes, it reveals that she had not only treasured in her heart the wondrous events connected with the birth and childhood of Jesus, but that she had also personally witnessed miracles of provision for her family, (which had been hidden from the rest of the family). Luke 2v40,52. Mary remembered how miracles of provision had met their needs on many occasions, when they had no money to buy food or wine for the family. This poverty was not because Jesus neglected His work to pray, it was because people did not pay their bills, because of circumstances, or because Satan had inspired and provoked dishonest people not to pay their bills for work that Jesus had done.

Jesus was tempted in all points like us. Heb 4v15. He knew what it was to be under severe financial deprivation and constraint, when he had to feed the large family of Mary (at least seven children besides Himself, Mark 6v3.) after Joseph had died. Mary had come a long way in God from the time when Jesus, at twelve, said in Luke 2v42,49,50, to Mary and Joseph in the Temple, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them." NKJV. What had produced this change, and real and deep faith? Mary knew and believed, from a rich personal experience of acts of Divine provision by miracles through the prayers of Jesus in her home, that Jesus could do a miracle to meet the need for wine.

God did not leave Mary to fight the battle alone over the dishonour and criticism that came upon her over the birth of Jesus, God stood by her and gave her many infallible proofs of His caring love, through many acts of miraculous provision at Nazareth, through the developing prophetic ministry of Jesus. These demonstrated that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Holy One of God. Mary's command to the servants in John 2v5, "Do whatever He tells you," shows the living and deep faith of Mary in Jesus, and her faith in His ability to perform a miracle. It was not a first act of blind faith; Mary had proved that "whatever" Jesus told her to do, in the realm of miraculous provision, came to pass. Mary had a list in her mind of numerous "whatevers" that had come to pass and produced miracles of provision for her family, and probably others also. This, and this alone, can explain Mary's confident, "Do whatever he tells you."

Where do we find the source of the development of Christ's tremendous prophetic ministry?

We read the following in Psalm 69v8-12,19,20,21: "I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother's children; Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You

have fallen on me. When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that became my reproach. I also made sackcloth my garment; I became a byword to them. Those who sit in the gate speak against me, and I am the song of the drunkards....You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonour; my adversaries are all before You. Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness, (the Hebrew adds, "and distressingly sick") I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

This Scripture reveals both the source and reason for the violent opposition against Jesus, was the remarkable prayer life of Jesus at Nazareth, which brought rejection and ostracism from His brothers and sisters and the people of Nazareth. Satan saw to it that Christ's life of prayer and fasting, stirred up opposition against Jesus, and He was mocked and sent to Coventry because of it.

If we say that Jesus prayed during His life at Nazareth, and the above prophetic facts in Psalm 69v8-11, about His life of prayer and fasting, prove that He did, then we must acknowledge that He must have had power gifts to bring an answer to His prayers. Jesus lived in continuous communion with the Father, He, like Enoch, walked with God His Father. The love-dominated nature of Jesus desired and loved to walk in the Spirit, it was His very nature to dwell in the Father and the Father in Him, and prayer was as natural to Him as breathing. John 14v10,11, 1John 2v24. **Paul states in 1Cor 12v31, that spiritual gifts are automatically manifested if we walk and pray in the "more excellent way," ("kath huperbolon hodon") of "agape" love.** Jesus certainly prayed, lived, and walked in love at Nazareth, so God His Father gave Him the revelation and power gifts on their highest levels of manifestation. It is impossible to believe that the child Samuel had more and greater revelations from God the Father than God's pure and holy child Jesus, His only begotten Son. Jesus revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush in the wilderness of Sinai, to prepare Moses for his ministry, the bush burned daily for Jesus at Nazareth as the Father prepared Jesus for His ministry.

Our Lord was truly a prophet like unto Moses Acts 3v22,23. And just as Moses was prepared for his ministry through daily living, so God prepared Jesus for His ministry through His daily life at Nazareth. This not only involved revelation about truth, the Father also gave Jesus information about people's needs, and trained Him in the operation of the gifts of power and revelation. Christ's Divine love, mercy, and compassion drove, and irresistibly constrained Him to pray for people in need; He could not help Himself. His secret prayers and intercessory "sighs too deep for words, and inexpressible yearnings" ("stenagmois alaletos," Rom 8v26.), breathed out on the behalf of people's needs, could not help but operate spiritual gifts in delivering power, for Jesus lived and prayed perfectly on "the more excellent way" of perfect love. The operation of these gifts was mightily effective, but totally hidden from people, and no one knew of the source of their divine help. Isaiah 49v1,2, 50v3-7. The vision ministry and prayer life of Jesus was totally directed by God the Father, and the power and influence of His prayer life, has never been equalled, and cannot be overstated.

By the time the Lord Jesus was 30 years old He was "full of grace and truth", and had become the perfect Servant. As there had never been any sin in Him, the Father gave His Son, the Holy Spirit without measure at His baptism, at the River Jordan, to fulfil His Messianic Mission, of preaching the Gospel to the poor, healing the broken-hearted, the recovery of sight to the blind, to send forth the crushed in liberty, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. John 1v14, 3v34, Luke 4v18,19, Isaiah 35v5,6.

By saying that the Lord Jesus did His miracles by simply turning on His Divine power, we rob Him completely of His true glory. His unique glory was the beautiful sinless loving life that He had lived at Nazareth, during which time the Father had prepared Him for His ministry, which He accomplished by total reliance upon the Father, so that He could say: "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of me." John 6v57 (NKJV). **Christ said that He lived by faith in the Father and by the life of the Father, and He said that we are to depend on Him as He depended on the Father. Christ Jesus has given us the perfect example to follow in all things.**

The ancient origin and dreadful effect of the doctrine of "Original Sin"

NB1 The mindset behind "Original Sin" has been around since the days of Adam and Eve.

People have usually tried to deny their guilt, or "excuse" their actions, by blaming someone else for their own wilful individual personal sin, when they have been confronted with their sin! Eve blamed the Serpent; Adam blamed Eve, and suggested that it was even God's fault for giving him Eve. **Gen 3v12,13.**

In the account of Cain's murder of his brother Abel, **God said in Gen 4v7., "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."** God told Cain to follow his brother Abel's example of "faith" and godly living, and then, by God's grace, Cain would be able to resist and "overcome" the temptation to wilfully sin. **Heb 11v4.** It is quite clear that God did **NOT** consider either Cain or Abel as being "born in sin," and incapable of living right, (as most Theologians

incorrectly state!), for **God very clearly tells Cain that he “should rule over sin.”** The word for “rule” is “mashal” (Strong’s NT:4910), which means, to master, to have dominion, to reign, to rule.

However, we know that Cain rejected God’s instruction on this issue and murdered his brother Abel. When God asked Cain where his brother was, Cain replied, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Gen 4v9. This was a vain attempt to deny his guilt. No doubt, like many today, Cain tried to excuse his evil actions to himself, with the excuse that he could not be blamed for his sin, for how could he be expected to lead a righteous life, when his father and mother had set him such a bad example, and sinned so grievously. **So we see that in the first family the foundation for the mindset of the “born in sin” doctrine was clearly laid down, they all desired to evade personal responsibility for their sin, and this was the bush to hide behind.**

The Exodus Of Israel From Egypt

By the time of The Exodus of Israel, in the 15th Century BC, from Egypt, Israel had been in Egypt for 400 plus years, during which time many had forgotten “the way of the Lord,” and had worshipped the idols of Egypt. We read in Ezek 20v7,8: “Then I said to them, ‘Each of you, throw away the abominations which are before his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.’” “But they rebelled against Me and would not obey Me. They did not all cast away the abominations, which were before their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I said, ‘I will pour out My fury on them and fulfil My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.’” (NKJ)

We read in Exodus 20v5: “Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.” The Lord was informing the Israelites that if the children followed and continued in the sins of their father’s, then, **and ONLY then**, would they share in their punishment. God refuted their belief that they were compelled to sin, because their father’s had sinned, and that they would share in their father’s punishment. The Lord was clearly stating that each person would die for their own sin, and **NOT** for their father’s or Adam’s sin. This statement of a person’s own personal responsibility for their own individual sin is also clearly stated again to the second generation by Moses in Deut 24v16, where it states: “The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.”

The second generation were still harbouring thoughts that they sinned because their fathers had sinned, and so would share in the father’s punishment, but the Lord tells them that, **“the soul that sinneth it shall die.”** God emphasises that each person is responsible for their own individual sin, and will be individually punished for it; clearly teaching the personal responsibility for one’s own actions! A thought strongly reiterated by God again in Ezek 18v20, which we will now consider in more detail.

NB2 In Ezek 18, God strongly teaches against, and rejects, the doctrine of Original sin

The doctrine of “Original Sin,” that is, “Born in Sin” theories, had been around for many centuries before Our Lord’s first Advent, indeed, it was still held by the Jews at the time of the Babylonian Captivity. We read (in about the year 590/589 BC), in **Ezek 18v1,2**, that, “the word of the Lord” came to Ezekiel, “saying, What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge?” God strongly refutes Israel’s wrong perception of the cause of their sin, which they believed was because they had been “born in sin,” for we read in Ezek 18v4, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” God states that their sin was **THEIR** own individual responsibility, **NOT** the result of their father’s, or Adam’s sin. The Jews, by claiming that they had been “born in sin,” endeavoured to remove their **OWN** personal responsibility for their own sin to somebody other than themselves, that is their fathers.

In Ezek 18v4,20, God censures and rejects the belief of the Jews, that they were “born in sin”

To emphasise this point in Ezek 18v4,20, God **TWICE** repeats, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die,” to really bring home to the Jews their **OWN** personal responsibility for their **OWN** sins! God also gives several telling examples of how a father’s sin is **NOT** imputed to the son, nor a son’s sin imputed to the father. This statement by Almighty God destroyed their excuse that a family ancestor was responsible, and really to blame, for their own personal sin. God clearly states the truth of a person’s own personal responsibility a person’s own individual actions and sins.

This same mindset was not only in the Jews who had been carried off into captivity to Babylon, it had also gripped and darkened the minds of the Jews still in Israel. It is written in Jer 31v29,30, “In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.” Here again, in a very clear and unequivocal way, God affirms the truth that “every one shall die for his own iniquity,” or as it is stated in Ezek 18v4,20, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” God again makes it very clear that each individual is responsible for their own sin; He rejects the excuse that their fathers, or Adam, were not responsible for their own personal sin.

This truth is also stated in Jer 18v1-11, when the Lord sent Jeremiah down to the potter’s house to give this same

important truth to the Jews in Israel, that He would deal with them according to their own individual sinful actions, **NOT** according to their father's sinful actions. God implores them in Jer 18v11, "**return you now every one from his evil way**, and make your ways and your doings good".

The tragic consequences of the rejection of the Divine warnings

It is quite clear that the Jews did not listen to God's warnings through Jeremiah or Ezekiel, regarding the terrible consequences of their wilful sin, which were produced by their false "born in sin" theories. **For we read in 2Chron 36v15-17:** "And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, **till there was no remedy.** v17 Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, on the aged or the weak; He gave them all into his hand." (NKJ) **God held them personally responsible for their sins, and brought them to account for them; He did not blame Adam for them.**

The great darkness that this destructive mindset brought upon the minds of **ALL** the people can be seen from their incredible wilful stubbornness, even after Nebuchadnezzar had come up against Jerusalem for a second time, and had set Zedekiah upon the throne of Judah (he reigned from 599 BC-588 BC), we read in 2Chron 36v12-14: "He (Zedekiah) did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and **humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the LORD.** And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel. Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem."

In Acts 7v51, Stephen castigates the Jewish religious leaders of his day: "**Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.**" This shows that the wilful "stubbornness and rebellion" of the Jewish nation was a well-established fact going back many generations!

It is not surprising to find that this destructive heresy of "Original Sin" was also still around and taught by the religious leaders of Israel at the time of Christ's first Advent. In John 9v34, Israel's religious leaders interrogated and excommunicated the man who had been born blind, whose sight had been restored by Jesus: "They answered and said to him, "**You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out.**" (NKJ) Just before this incident, even the Apostles asked Jesus in John 9v2,3, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

Jesus And Paul Taught That Children Are Born Spiritually Alive To God

NB1 Jesus states that children are alive to God, and are NOT "born in sin," and spiritually dead

Jesus states that the truth is the very opposite to the doctrine of Original sin, and that a child is born spiritually alive to God, and in receipt of God's grace, having a pure soul and spirit. Matt 18v1-10, 19v14.

Jesus states in Matt 18v1-4,10: "At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. "Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven." (NKJ)

Note well: Jesus said that little children are looked upon as the officially authorized inhabitants of the kingdom of heaven, and we have to become like them, or we will not enter heaven. Jesus totally refutes Augustine's doctrine that children are born depraved and polluted by sin, and if they are not baptised, will go to Hell like the very worst sinner. Jesus said that the angels of a little child have unrestricted access to God. **God commands and forbids Satan to hinder the ministries of God's angels to little children.**

Matt 19v13-15 also states: "Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; **for of such is the kingdom of heaven.**" And He laid His hands on them and departed from there."(NKJ)

Note well: Jesus said of little children, "**for of such is the kingdom of heaven.**" Jesus declares that children have the spiritual purity of the inhabitants of the kingdom of heaven; this again totally refutes Augustine's doctrine that children are "born in sin," and are depraved and polluted by sin.

NB2 Paul tells us that children are born spiritually alive to God

Paul informs us in Rom 7v9-12. **"I was once alive** ("ezon pote") without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died; the very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and by it killed me. So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good."

In Rom 7v9: "I was alive," is the imperfect active, "ezon" (Strong's NT:2198). Paul is speaking of the time, when as an infant, he did not know the difference between right and wrong; this was before his conscience awoke and he became morally responsible for his actions. ("Without," is "choris" (Strong's NT:5565), an adverb meaning without, apart, separate). Paul says he was alive to God in his period of childlike innocence, until God's Law revealed right and wrong to him, and he did the wrong, and died spiritually.

NB3 Rom 5v13-14: "For until the law sin was in the world: **but sin is not imputed when there is no law.** Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over **them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression**, who is the figure of him that was to come." See **Rom 4v15:** "For the law brings wrath, **but where there is no law there is no transgression.**"

When "the commandment came," and was applied to Paul's heart and conscience, and Paul knew right from wrong, "sin revived, ("he" 3588, "hamartia" 266, "anezesen" 326). Sin came to life; the period of innocence was over, and because Paul had broken the Law, he died spiritually. The word "anazao" (Strong's NT:326), means to live again, it is usually applied to a renewal of life, Rom 14v19, Luke 15v24,32, but here it means sin, which was before dormant, was now quickened into life. The Jews thought that the Law would sanctify and give comfort to the soul, but both Jesus and Paul say that the broken law produced guilt, woe, and a bad conscience. "And I died," Paul had become conscious of his sin through his violation of The Law, and realised that it brought about his spiritual death.

Paul here talks about his own consciousness of sin. As a child, he did not really understand the Law, or God's purpose in giving the Law. The failure to understand the demands of the Law is not confined to children. The young adult, the rich young ruler, mistakenly asserted, "I have observed all these things from my youth." Mark 10v20, Matt 19v20, Luke 18v21. There came a day in Paul's life when God's command, "Thou shalt not covet," condemned him, and revealed that he was not living according to that command. Through the commandment, Paul realised that sin had first deceived him, and then had brought about his spiritual death. Satan had been behind this, and his objective was the eternal ruin of all humanity.

Paul states in Rom 3v10-24, The tragic truth of man's fall into sin from the innocence of God's creation

"As it is written, None is righteous, just and truthful and upright and conscientious, no, not one. [Ps.14v3.] No one understands [no one intelligently discerns or comprehends]; no one seeks out God. [Ps.14v2.] **All have turned aside; together they have gone wrong and have become unprofitable and worthless; no one does right, not even one!** Their throat is a yawning grave; they use their tongues to deceive (to mislead and to deal treacherously). The venom of asps is beneath their lips. [Ps.5v9. 140v3.] Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. [Ps.10v7.] Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery mark their ways. And they have no experience of the way of peace [they know nothing about peace, for a peaceful way they do not even recognize]. [Isa.59v7,8.] There is no [reverential] fear of God before their eyes. [Ps.36v1.] Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that [the murmurs and excuses of] every mouth may be hushed and all the world may be held accountable to God. For no person will be justified (made righteous, acquitted, and judged acceptable) in His sight by observing the works prescribed by the Law. For [the real function of] the Law is to make men recognize and be conscious of sin But now the righteousness of God has been revealed independently and altogether apart from the Law, although actually it is attested by the Law and the Prophets, Namely, the righteousness of God which comes by believing with personal trust and confident reliance on Jesus Christ (the Messiah). [And it is meant] for all who believe. For there is no distinction, Since all have sinned and are falling short of the honor and glory, which God bestows and receives. [All] are justified and made upright and in right standing with God, freely and gratuitously by His grace (His unmerited favour and mercy), through the redemption, which is [provided] in Christ Jesus. AMP

In these Old Testament quotations in Rom 3v10-24, Paul teaches and brings out the truth that "each individual person sins because they WANT to, NOT because they HAVE to." Their own wilful individual personal sin being the result of their own freewill choice, as Isaiah 53v6, states, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." Augustine interpreted Rom 7v14-25, as being Paul's **POST**-conversion Christian experience, which is certainly not true.

NB4 Paul's Teaching on "Sin in the flesh." Rom 7v8-8v4. NB3

Paul received his doctrine of "sin in the flesh" directly and personally from the Lord Jesus. Gal 1v11,12. Paul teaches that it was not corruption in the soul from Adam that led him astray, but rather the temptations that come from the body, from the flesh, **in Rom 8v3 , Paul calls this, "sin in the flesh."**

In Rom 7v18 to 8v4, Paul graphically describes his bondage to the flesh in his pre-Christian days, and then in Rom 8v2, describes how "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made him free from the law of sin and death." Paul informs us in Rom 8v3,4, "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." (NKJV) **The glorious victory of Jesus over "sin in the flesh," and His awesome enabling presence and power, gives us victory over sin.**

In Rom 8v12-16, Paul tells of the contrasting ends of those who walk in the flesh and Spirit. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors; not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."

The Christian will experience conflict with the flesh and its biological machinery and desires

We read in Gal 5v16-17: "And I say: In the Spirit walk ye, and the desire of the flesh ye may not complete; for the flesh doth desire contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit contrary to the flesh, and these are opposed one to another, that the things that ye may will — these ye may not do." YLT.

"Are opposed the one to the other," is "allelois" 240, "antikeitai" 480, and it means that they are lined up in face-to-face conflict [anti], a spiritual duel with the flesh and the Devil. ("Antikeitai," is the present indicative of the verb "antikeimai." The verb means, "to lie opposite to;" hence, "to oppose, withstand." **Vine** says that the present participle of the verb with the article, is equivalent to a noun, and signifies, "an adversary," e.g., Luke 13v17, 21v15, 1Cor 16v9, Phil 1v28, 1Tim 5v14. In 2Thess 2v4, this same construction is used to describe the Man of Sin, and is translated "He that opposeth." It is used in 1Tim 1v10, of anything, or anyone, that is opposed to the truth in Jesus. Here in Gal 5v17, it describes the conflict between the believer's spirit and flesh. In Sept. see Zech 3v1, Isaiah 66v6, and Job 13v24.

Barnes writes, of Gal 5v17, "And these are contrary. They are opposite in their nature. They never can harmonize; see Rom 8v6v7, compare Gal 5:19-23. The contrariety Paul has illustrated by showing what each produces; and they are as opposite as adultery, wrath, strife, murders, drunkenness, etc., are to love, joy, goodness, gentleness, and temperance." End of quote.

Walking in the Spirit, and crucifying the flesh, are absolute necessities for the Christian. We read in **Gal 5v16,24-26**, "I say then: walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

Paul warns us in Gal 6v7-9: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." NKJV

We have a demanding and exhausting spiritual warfare against powerful evil angels

Paul warns us in Eph 6v10-20, that we have great evil spiritual forces opposing us. They attack our thoughts, and try to inflame the desires of the flesh, and corrupt us through worldly things. They try to take away our anointing with their energy lines. The fiery darts of Satan and the powers of darkness are a reality, but through Jesus' Name, God's power and armoury, we can quench them all, and cause Satan and his evil allies to flee. They were totally defeated by Jesus at the Cross. Col 2v14,15, Heb 2v14.

However, if we want to make Satan flee from us, the breastplate of righteousness (a holy life) is vital part of the Christian's armour. **James makes this clear in James 4v4-10**, "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? **But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." Therefore submit to God. Resist ("antistete") the devil and he will flee ("feuxetai, future of feugo") from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." In 1Peter 5v9**, "Whom withstand," is also "antistete," the imperative aorist active of "anthistemi," "take a stand against." the

same form and instruction as James 4v7.

In Prov 7v2-27, we read that God's Word and a holy life will keep us from being defeated, and led into sin by the strong desires of the flesh. "Keep my commands and live, And my law as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; Write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," And call understanding your nearest kin, That they may keep you from the immoral woman, From the seductress who flatters with her words." NKJV

David, in Psalm 17v8,9, asked God to; "Keep me as the apple of Your eye; Hide me under the shadow of Your wings, From the wicked who oppress me, From my deadly enemies who surround me." NKJV. **Particularly note, Zech 2v8**: "The Lord of Glory has sent me against the nations that oppressed you, **for he who harms you sticks his finger in Jehovah's eye!**" TLB. We read in Deut 32v10, that God kept Israel "as the apple of his eye." Those who attack godly Jews and godly Christians are in serious trouble. It is very dangerous to poke God in the eye! Judgement and eternal judgement awaits those who do it.

When our Lord Jesus had His conflicts with the Devil and his evil angels; He became so physically weak that had to be strengthened by angels. We too will find that it will take God's aid and presence, and His spiritual gifts, to defeat the Wicked One. We read in 2Cor 10v3-5, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

"Bringing every thought into captivity," is "aichmalotizontes pan noema." "Aichmalotizontes," is the present active participle of "aichmalotizo" 163, from "aichmalotos" 164, a captive taken at spear point in war. See Luke 4v18. Jesus came to release Satan's prisoners of war. We can defeat all Satan's lies and bring them at spear point to Jesus. "To the obedience of Christ," is the objective genitive, "to the obedience unto Christ." Paul states that laying all our thoughts at the feet of Jesus brings true liberty, and freedom. Contrast Luke 21v24. This describes Jerusalem being sacked and devastated by Satan, at the spear point of Rome, and Antichrist, because of their refusal to listen to Jesus.

Peter writes in 2Peter 2v1,2: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who secretly shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And **many** shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." The word "secretly," is the Greek, "pareisaxousin", the future active of "pareisago" 3919, which means, to introduce surreptitiously, to bring in secretly or craftily. This is exactly what Augustine did when he introduced the destructive heresy of Docetic Gnosticism through his abominable doctrine of "Original Sin."

The Glorious Victory of Jesus over the world, the flesh, and the Devil

NB All through His life Jesus had conflict with His flesh, and with the Devil, just as we do.

We read in **Heb 4v15**. "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, **but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.**" (NKJ) Jesus had a nature like ours, with all the propensities and passions of a man. Jesus was subjected to all the kinds of temptation and trial that come against us; He is, therefore, able to sympathize with us and to aid us.

"Being tempted, or tried," in Heb 4v15, is "pepeirasmenon," the perfect passive participle of "peirazo," (Strong's NT:3985), as in Heb 2v17. It means, to tempt, to test, and to try the nature or character. The perfect tense emphasises the completed state and permanent nature of the tests that Jesus went through, and the compassion and sympathy graced to us by Jesus through the trials and temptations He suffered on our behalf. Jesus is our brother, and He "is not ashamed to call us brethren."

"Yet without sin." See 1Pet 2v22, "Who did no sin;" and Isaiah 53v9, "He had done no violence, neither was there any deceit in his mouth." See Heb 7v26, "Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Our Great High Priest was "without sin," and is able to assist sinners who put their trust in Him.

We read in Heb 2v18., that Jesus having been tempted, ("peirastheis" the first aorist passive participle of "peirazo" 3985), is able to succour those who are now being tempted, ("peirazomenois" the present passive of "peirazo" Strong's NT:3985). As He was tempted and tried in all points, He is able to succour ("run to the cry of," ("boethesai," the first aorist active infinitive of the compound verb "boetheo" (Strong's NT:997), to run at a cry or call for help). In Matt 15v25, the Syrophenician uses this very same word.

The Expositor's Greek Testament gives light on Rom 8v3, "In the likeness of sinful flesh."

It states: "But the emphasis in "homoioima" is on Christ's likeness to us, not His unlikeness; "flesh of sin" is one idea

to the Apostle, and what he means by it is that God sent His Son in that nature which in us is identified with sin. This was the "form" (and "form" rather than "likeness" is what "homoiomia" signifies) in which Christ appeared amongst men. It does not prejudice Christ's sinlessness, which is a fixed point with the Apostle 'ab initio'; and if anyone says it involves a contradiction to maintain that Christ was sinless, and that He came in a nature which with us is identified with sin, it may be pointed out that this identification does not belong to the essence of our nature, but to its corruption, and that **the uniform teaching of the New Testament is that Christ is one with us—short of sin.** The likeness and the limitation of it (though the former is the point here urged) are equally essential in the Redeemer." End of quote.

Vincent writes on Rom 8v3, "In the likeness of sinful flesh." "Literally, "of the flesh of sin." The choice of words is especially noteworthy. Paul does not say simply, "He came in flesh" (1John 4v2; 1Tim 3v16), for this would not have expressed the bond between Christ's manhood and sin. Not "in the flesh of sin," which would have represented Him as partaking of sin. Not "in the likeness of flesh," since He was really and entirely human; but, "in the likeness of the flesh of sin:" **really human, conformed in appearance to the flesh whose characteristic is sin, yet sinless.**" End of quote.

Alford writes on Rom 8v3: "in the likeness of the flesh of sin' (the flesh 'whose attribute and character was sin). The genitive is not 'hamartolou,' but implies far more-[not merely the contamination by, but] the belonging to and being possessed by."---**He had a nature 'like sinful human nature'- but had not Himself 'a sinful nature,'** Compare Heb 4v15...**He was able to be tempted, i.e. subjected to sensuous incitements, e.g. of pain, which in other men break out into sin, but in Him did not.**" End of quote.

We read in Rom 8v3, that Jesus totally conquered the temptations from His flesh, and so condemned sin in the flesh, "katekrinen" 2632, "ten" 3588, "hamartian" 266, "en" 1722, "te" 3588, "sarki" 4561." **"Katekrinen,"** is the aorist active indicative of "katakrino" (Strong's NT:2632), **to judge against, to condemn.** Jesus condemned men's sins by His victory over the desires of the flesh, **"the condemnation took place in the flesh of Jesus."** **"Likeness,"** in "the likeness of sinful flesh," is "homoiomati" 3667, "sarkos" 4561, "hamartias" 266." **It means that Jesus was a real man, and not a phantom as the Docetic Gnostics held.** For "likeness," see Phil 2v7, "In the likeness of men, "en homoiomati anthropon." Jesus conquered the flesh that had corrupted and led all mankind into sin. In Rom 8v1-4, Paul informs us that Christ's victory over sin, not only condemned sin in the flesh, but also enables us to live in victory over sin, through the law of the spirit and life in Christ. Jesus partook of human flesh, but did not partake of the sins of the flesh; His holy life condemned sin in the flesh and showed that it was possible to live in victory over it.

In Heb 2v16-18, we read that Jesus took on Him the seed of Abraham, and that it was a moral duty and obligation, "opheilen," the imperfect active indicative of "opheilo," to be obligated, a debt to be paid. Before the foundation of the world, Jesus had obligated Himself to be made in all points like unto His brethren, and experience the same temptations, so that He could be our sympathetic High Priest. The Trinity bound themselves by this selfless obligation, gigantic commitment, and solemn promise, for Jesus to come in flesh and die for us. Titus 1v2, Rev 13v8. To be tempted in all points as we are, He had to be made in all points as we are. Heb 2v17 with 4v15. **From the level of our humanity, Jesus conquered the world, the flesh, and the Devil.** Blessed be His Name!

We read in Heb 2v17, "Because" he has suffered being tempted, he is able to sympathize with sufferers. Jesus knows all about our temptations and trials, not only as God, but also as man, through experiencing them Himself. Heb 5v2,8. **Jesus has suffered more, infinitely more, than we can ever know, and in all our trials, temptations and sorrows, we shall never reach the ghastly depths of temptation and trial that He endured.** There is no trial that we experience, which He has not experienced far worse than we have.

Jesus has won the most wonderful deliverance for us. Blessed be His Name!

We read in Eph 2v1-10: "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. **But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,** even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." NKJV

See Col 2v11, "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, **in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh** by the circumcision of Christ." See 1Pet 4v1-4, 1John 2v16. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

In the last days, there will be a great eruption of sexual sin. Jude v7,8.

James learned his doctrine of “sin in the flesh” from Jesus, by living with Him for about 30 years
He writes in James 1v13-16: “Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted from God; for God is incapable of being tempted by [what is] evil and He Himself tempts no one. But **every person is tempted when he is drawn away, enticed and baited by his own evil desire (lust, passions). Then the evil desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully matured, brings forth death.** Do not be misled, my beloved brethren.” Amplified Version.

It is the matured and determined attitude to sin that brings about the spiritual death of the soul. When does this occur in a child? Paul says that it is when they fully comprehend right from wrong, and this may vary in children. Children certainly differ a great deal, you have the godly child Samuel, and in contrast, you have wicked Pharaoh, who was opposed to God for most of his life.

We also see this mature and determined attitude to sin demonstrated in the incredible stubbornness of the people that Jesus preached to during His ministry, for only a small percentage repented at His preaching, even though it was confirmed by mighty signs, wonders, and miracles; the like of which had never been seen before. Jesus was broken hearted over this terrible rejection of God’s love and forgiveness; we see Him weeping uncontrollably over Jerusalem and an apostate nation, for He saw in prophetic vision, what was going to happen to them in the not too distant future.

We read in Luke 19v41-44: “Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept, saying, “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now, they are hidden from your eyes. “For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, “and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”(NKJ)

The words “but now they are hid from thine eyes” speak volumes! We see that the end result of the spiritual blindness generated by their unrepentant attitudes, is apostasy, death and destruction. In 66 AD, the Jews in their blind pride and arrogance rose up in rebellion against the Romans in an attempt to throw off their yoke. The result was that in 70 AD, Jerusalem was absolutely destroyed, even as the Lord had seen in vision, and 1,100,000 Jews were killed, with many being crucified, or impaled upon stakes, upon the hills surrounding the city, as witnessed and written about by Titus Flavius Josephus.

In Luke 19v41, “wept,” is “eklausen,” the aorist active indicative of “klaio” (Strong’s NT:2799), to sob, i.e. wail aloud, which Mary did in John 11v33. In John 11v35, “Jesus wept,” “wept,” is “edakrusen,” the aorist active indicative of “dakruo,” from “dakru,” a tear. The verb “dakruo” (Strong’s NT:1145), only occurs here in John 11v35 in the New Testament, it never means to wail as “klaio” 2799 does, but rather to shed tears, it can mean to cry silently. Jesus was deeply moved with the grief of Mary and Martha and burst into tears. It was a grief too deep for words. Jesus understood, and still understands our grief. This shortest verse in the Bible, tells us that Jesus really feels for us, and suffers with us in our times of deepest need and inner pain. See Heb 4v15. God really understands and cares. Those who mourn can always come to God for His amazing comfort. Matt 5v4, Mark 16v10, Luke 6v21, 2Cor 1v3-10. (In Acts 20v19, we read that Paul prayed with moving compassion and tears for the Christians at Ephesus, “with tears,” is “dakruon.”)

Our Lord’s great inner conflict and pain in Gethsemane is seen in Heb 5v7, where we read that Jesus prayed, “with strong crying and tears,” “meta krauges kai dakruon,” as He fought to win our salvation. It was a selfless, and most agonising and painful battle, and He won it for us. Blessed be His Name!

How did Jesus overcome temptation from the world, the flesh and the Devil?

We read in the Scriptures that Jesus was in all things made like us, Heb 2v17, and “was in all points tempted as we are,” Heb 4v15, in order to be our sympathetic, merciful and faithful great High Priest.

We read in Rom 8v3: that Jesus was made “in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” “Likeness,” is “homoiomati” (Strong NT:3667), “**exactly as in Phil 2v7, Jesus had, “a real and exact likeness of our humanity, Jesus was not a Docetic phantom.**” Jesus condemned the sin of men by overcoming the temptations from the flesh, which had corrupted the rest of mankind. Jesus had the flesh, which led all the rest of mankind into sin, but His glory is that He overcame it, and was sinless. Paul affirms that Jesus possessed a human nature like that of all mankind; but that He remained sinless, because he never yielded to the impulses of His fleshly nature.

Jesus was certainly tempted for we read in Heb 2v18. “For in that He Himself has **suffered, being tempted,** He is able to succour (“boethesai,” the aorist active infinitive of “boetheo,” to run at a cry or call for help, to those who

are tempted. See Matt 15v25.) Again, we read in **Heb 4v15,16**, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but **was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin**. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

How did Jesus overcome sin? If we say that He turned on His deity, then He was not tempted in all points as we are. We find the secret in Psalm 69v8-12: "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. For **the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up**; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me. **When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting**, that was to my reproach. I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them. They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards."

This Scripture states that Jesus disciplined His flesh with fasting and prayer, and He was consumed with zeal to save us and do His Father's will. This brought horrific opposition and terrible inner pain, but communion with His Father brought Him through. If we want to win the battle with the flesh, we have to follow our Lord's example. Paul certainly did, he writes in **1Cor 9v26,27**, Therefore, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; but I pommel and discipline my body and subdue it and make it my slave, lest after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified." Let us follow the example of our Lord and Paul, and exercise self-discipline through communion with God.

In Rom 7v7 to 8v4 Paul teaches that he, like his Lord, was born with, "dead sin in the flesh," however, unlike his Lord, Paul, like everybody else, yielded to this temptation from the sinful desires of the flesh. As a result, Paul, like everyone else, died spiritually as a result of yielding to this temptation. Whereas the Lord Jesus resisted every temptation and conquered them, and thus He "condemned sin in the flesh." Rom 8v3. This vital truth of our Lord's true humanity is also clearly stated by Paul in Heb 2v17,18 and 4v14-16, where he states that Jesus was not only "**made like unto His brethren in ALL THINGS,**" but that Jesus was also "**in ALL points tempted like as we are.**" **Positive proof of His humanity.**

The Great Tribulation

Satan is allowed to run riot at the end of this age; "the mystery of lawlessness." 2Thess 2v7.

At the end of this Age, the Age of Grace, immediately before our Lord's Second Coming, there will be a time of great trouble of three and a half years duration, the like of which has never been seen since the beginning of the world, this period of time is called, "The Great Tribulation." We are told in Rev 12v7-12, that this tribulation occurs, because Satan and his evil angels, now in the heavenly places, are cast out of them into the earth, and Satan begins his plan, called, "the Mystery of Iniquity" ("Iniquity," is "anomias," (Strong's NT:458), lawlessness). God has up to this time restrained Satan's plans, however, during The Great Tribulation God allows Satan to put his plans into operation, to expose Satan's great wickedness. See 2Thess 2v3-12, **NB v7,8:** "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who **now restrains** will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the Lawless One will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming." NKJV. "Kai katargesei te epiphaneia tes parousias autou," The commanding word and outshining, splendour and glory of Jesus at His second coming destroys his enemies. Rev 19v15,19-21, Zech 14v12.

"Restrains" in Greek is, "katechon" (Strong's NT:2722), to hold fast or down, to restrain. There will be a sudden deluge of evil into the world, which will produce conditions like those experienced by Noah before the Flood, and Lot, when he fled from Sodom. During this time because "iniquity shall abound (literally, has come to the full) the "agape" love of many (Christians) will wax cold," these believers will be overwhelmed by the evil in the world, because they have failed to prepare themselves for this terrible time. Rev 7v14, 12v9,12,14, Matt 24v12,21, Eph 6v12, 2Thess 2v1-12, NB: v7, Luke 17v26-37, 18v1-8, Dan 8v23.

John writes in 1John.4v1-6: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

The danger of a renewed upsurge of Docetic Gnosticism in the last days

The apostle John states very strongly that the person who "confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is **not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist.**" He is referring here to the destructive heresy of Docetic

Gnosticism, which many Christians today hold and believe, because of their acceptance of the doctrine of "Original Sin." When John stated that the person who does not believe that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is "not of God," and has "the spirit of antichrist," he clearly had in mind also, not just his own time, but also the time of The Great Tribulation. During which the final and most evil Antichrist sets up his image in the Temple in Jerusalem, from where he reigns. **John states that we can only overcome Antichrist**, the false prophets and teachers, of the evil days of The Great Tribulation, **if** we believe "that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh", that is if we recognise that Jesus had a real humanity exactly like our own, and NOT as the false prophets and teachers teach, that He was Docetic phantom. 2Thess 2v4.

The believer will only overcome in these dark evil days if their mind is filled with truth, as John writes in 1John 5v4, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

The truth that we believe in these evil dark days that are coming is vital for our eternal salvation, because, as our Lord stated in Matt 24v12,13, "And because iniquity shall abound, the "agape" love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." It is quite clear that it is those who have their minds filled with the Truth, and have prayed and not fainted, who will be saved, the others will have backslidden and gone into apostasy, so it is vital for us as believers to "love" the truth. **Luke 18v1. See 2Thess 2v10**. "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."

Paul, in writing to Timothy in 1Timothy 3v16, states the vital truth that, "God was manifest in the flesh" and then immediately in the next verse, **1Timothy 4v1**, goes on to state; "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils!" Paul, like John, knew that the destructive heresy of Docetic Gnosticism would still be in the Church in the last days, and so he warns us against believing it, by stating that our Lord did, indeed, come in the flesh, and had a humanity like our own. Paul states that the denial of the humanity of Christ in the days of The Great Tribulation will mean that "some will depart from the faith."

Peter writes to the Christians of the five Roman provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, in Asia Minor, to warn them about and against the development of the Docetic and Cerinthian Gnostic heresies, which also greatly disturbed Paul, and he wrote against it in Colossians, Ephesians, and Pastoral Epistles, and John also attacks this mindset in his Gospel, Epistles, and the Apocalypse.

Peter states in 2Pet 1v16 to 2v3: "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we heard this voice, which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

2Pet 2v1-3: "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber." NKJV

Peter saw the terrible effects of the evil doctrine of Docetic Gnosticism in the Church in the last days of this Age, especially in the last three and a half years of this Age (The Great Tribulation) and the end of the false teachers, and those who believe them. These apostates will deny the Lord who bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction, and go into eternal punishment. The doctrine of "Original Sin," craftily and secretly brings this very doctrine of Docetic Gnosticism into the Church, and in The Great Tribulation it will produce spiritual confusion, bewilderment, havoc and apostasy in the Church.

In 2Pet 1v16, Peter uses the phrase, "cunningly devised fables", "sesophismenois" (Strong's NT:4679), "muthois" (Strong's NT:3454). "Sesophismenois," is the perfect passive participle of "sophizo," to invent cleverly (as used here) or to play the sophist. "Muthois," is an old term for word, narrative, story, fiction, fable, and falsehood. Peter states that the false doctrine of the Docetic Gnostics is "cleverly invented fiction, fables and falsehoods."

Peter states that the false teachers and those who accept and believe the evil doctrine of Docetism from them, will lead a "pernicious" life. "Pernicious ways" is the Greek "aselgeiais" (Strong's NT:766), the associative instrumental

case of "aselgeia," which means, unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, shamelessness, and insolence. **In 2Pet 2v3-22**, he goes on to give Old Testament examples of the character of these evil people and their final end.

In Matt 24v45-25v13, Jesus gives two examples of those who come through The Great Tribulation victoriously, in the "faithful and wise servant" and the "five wise virgins," and two examples of those who do not, in the "evil servant" and the "five foolish virgins,"

NB1 "The Contrast Between Adam and Christ in Their Effect Upon Humanity: Rom 5v12-21

Some interpret these verses in Romans to mean that men are forced into sin, and they cannot help sinning, because of the sin of Adam. Those who insist that these verses teach that all humanity is forced into evil by Adam's sin, must accept that this would make these verses teach ultimate reconciliation for all mankind. The key verses are verses 17,18, and 19; Adam's sin did not force men to be sinners, no more than Christ's atonement forces men to be justified; **in both cases, the free will of man is the determining factor!** Rom 5v12,17. The result of following Adam is spiritual death; whereas the result of following Christ is justification and spiritual life. Isaiah 53v6. Paul compares the severity of God in condemning Adam after one sin, with God's mercy to the Christian after a multitude of sins. Rom 5v16, James 5v19,20. Adam's first sin, the first step away from God, was the beginning of many steps away from God. God dealt immediately with Adam's sin, both for Adam's and the Creation's sake, lest he continued to live forever by partaking continually of the tree of life. Notice the kind and gentle attempts to make Adam and Eve confess their sin, and the thoughtful provision of God, even after their rebellion. **The physical death which fell upon the human race after Adam's sin, is not the result of any person's sin, for children still die who have not sinned, Rom 5v14, physical death is the result of the withdrawal of the tree of life.** Had not this been done, Adam would have lived in sin forever. Gen 3v22-24.

NB2 The secret of Paul's prayer life and spiritual victory. Rom 8v26

Paul states that the Holy Spirit always makes His unlimited abilities available to us when we pray.

Paul writes in Rom 8v26: "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (NKJ) In, "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought," "as we ought," is "kathō dei," "as it is necessary." Rom 8v26. After about 25 years of Christian experience, Paul states that it was only the Holy Spirit's help and gifts that prevented him from making mistakes over what to pray for, and enabled him to intercede effectively for God's saints. **NB:** John 14v16,17,26, 15v26,27, 16v6,16,17.

In the light of this intercession by the Holy Spirit, we can well understand why Paul thanked God in **1Cor 14v18**, that he spoke in tongues more than any of the verbose tongue speaking Corinthians. Praying in tongues releases the Holy Spirit's power gifts, and prayer for the saints according to the will and desires of God. **We do not know how to pray "as we ought," "kathō dei," "as it is necessary," but the Holy Spirit, "maketh intercession for us;"** "huperentungchanei," (Strong's NT:5241), which only occurs here in the New Testament. It is derived from the verb "entungchano," (Strong's NT:1793)," which means "to light upon or fall in with; to go to meet," and signifies to intercede or negotiate for another. **A. T. Robertson** says "It is a picturesque word of rescue by one who "happens on," "entungchanei" 1793, one who is in trouble and "in his behalf," "huper," 5228, pleads "with unuttered groanings" (instrumental case) or with "sighs that baffle words" (Denney)." **End of quote.** Compare Acts 25v24, Rom 8v34, 11v2, Heb 7v25.

Paul tells us in Rom 8v26,27, that the Holy Spirit is always available to us, to take hold with us against our infirmities, weakness, and limitations. "Helps," poorly expresses the thought in "sunantilambanetai," the present indicative of "sunantilambanomai," (Strong's NT:4878), "to lend a hand together with, at the same time with one." It is a compound of "sun," (Strong's NT:4862)," "with," or "together;" and "anti," (Strong's NT:473), "against;" and "lambanomai," (Strong's NT:2983), "to take and get hold of," and so, "to actively support and help." The Holy Spirit comes to enable us to pray, and mightily supplement our weakness and limitations with His infinite abilities, grace and love. The Holy Spirit comes to make the promise real to us that, "by Christ's bruise we are healed," and to reveal to us the ghastly bruising of our Lord's emotions, body, soul, and spirit, during his life, ministry and atonement, that have bought healing for our body soul and spirit. By His bruise, we are healed!

Final Conclusion

The heart-felt warnings of the New Testament Apostles and Holy Spirit inspired writers could not be any clearer, they warn us of the dire consequences of accepting the damnable heresy of Docetic Gnosticism. Christians do not realise that this can definitely come about as a result of holding and believing Augustine's false doctrine of "Original Sin," and his "born in sin" theories. **God states in Hosea 4v6, "My people are destroyed (perish) for lack of the knowledge (of ME)." They lack of the correct knowledge about Jesus and the Father.** It is vitally important to have a correct interpretation of the Scriptures about the true humanity of Jesus, or we fail to have the true and deep relationship with Jesus and the Father that they, and we, desire. If we fail to understand our Lord's

humanity, we will not realise the extent of the sufferings of Jesus for us. A correct knowledge about Christ's humanity sets us spiritually free.

John 17v17: "Sanctify them through ("en" (Strong's NT:1722), in, by, with, through) Your truth. Your word is truth."

John 8v31,32: "Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (NKJ)

Appendix III: The Informal Fellowship Meeting

The Church Was Planned And Ordained By God, Not Men.

A) Christ gave us the full and permanent teaching on Church Organisation.

Our submission to the Lordship of Christ is proved by our submission to His will and truth, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." John 7v17. The doctrine on Church government is as inspired and permanent a part of the foundation of Scripture truth as any other truth. Eph 2v20, 3v5, John 15v16, 16v13. When Christ founded the Church, He instituted its doctrine on organisation as well as its other doctrine. **God conceived and planned the Church before Creation; it is not a man-made institution.** Eph 1v4,5,11, Col 1v26,27, Rom 8v28-30, 1Cor 2v7. The New Testament Scriptures are our only basis for doctrine on Church organisation as well as the other Christian doctrine. Our standard of Church organisation is not even early post-apostolic Church organisation, for the traditions of even this early period can lead us astray. **The Scriptures alone are the sole rule of faith and conduct.** 2Tim 3v14-17, 1Cor 14v37, 2Pet 3v2,15,16, Rev 22v18,18. God was not negligent of the organisation of the Church; He did not leave it to the discretion or ingenuity of its leaders, or to the customs of the people, district, or land where the Gospel was preached. **Before creation the Trinity had ordained, planned and predestined all things in relation to the Church and its organisation.** They considered what was the best method of Church organisation to encourage spiritual growth and evangelistic success, and at the same time be suited to every age, nation and circumstance, and would survive best in persecution. **When Christ founded the Church, He built it to his own specifications, design, plan and order.** Matt 16v18.

God did not leave Church organisation to human ingenuity.

The same ingenuity of man, that has produced many different systems of worldly government, has been applied to Church government. This has inevitably resulted in a departure from New Testament organisation, doctrine and practice; and a consequent loss of the spiritual life and power that the early Church experienced. God did not leave the pattern of Israel's worship to the ingenuity of godly Moses. Indeed, God warned Moses to follow the exact pattern of organisation and worship that He had given him. Heb 8v5, 1Chron 28v19. God did not leave the structure of Church organisation to men's desire, ingenuity, discretion, accommodation or expediency, He has given clear details of how His Church should be organised and run. **Unfortunately, Christian leaders throughout Church history have followed the example of Israel's religious leaders and built religious power structures, and replaced the divinely ordained organisation of the Church with their own traditions.** This has resulted in the frustration of the Divine purposes and the disappearance of the manifestations of Divine love, life and power that were so apparent in the early Church. If it were not for the godly praying hearts in many churches, all that would be left is a dead form, which brings disillusionment and discouragement to needy souls desperately seeking God's power and blessing.

B) Unscriptural Church Organisation often violates Christ's Lordship.

Church history reveals that men have arrogantly and presumptuously altered the structure of Christ's Church; they felt that they could improve upon Christ's form of Church organisation. Psalm 19v13,14, Col 1v18-20, 2v6-10. **If we lay aside His truth for our own ideas, we can end up with a religion, which though called Christianity, has really little to do with it.** Gal 1v6-10, 2Cor 11v1-6. The Church is Christ's Church; converts are born at God's will, not at the will of men; the Church is God's flock; it is bought with Christ's blood, and it is under the superintendence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. John 1v12,13, Isaiah 53v11, Acts 20v28, Titus 3v5, 1Pet 1v3,23. God can, and does, overlook genuine ignorance, but he cannot overlook wilful ignorance and rebellion. Acts 17v30, 1Sam 15v23.

The unity of Christ's Church cannot take place around the constitutions of men, it can only take place when the Church is subordinate to the Lordship of Jesus and the Holy Spirit and follows their directions. The true Christian finds no appeal in the organic unity of church federations; he looks and longs for a true fellowship and unity of the Spirit, and a genuine body ministry of believers, who own Jesus as Lord. If we refuse to accept the Lordship and leadership of Christ, there is always barrenness in our organisations and constitutions no matter how doctrinally

correct or adequate they may seem to be. When the Church lost its first love and began to get away from God, men began to usurp God's authority and build their own religious kingdoms, while claiming that they were building God's kingdom.

The Church as God's "Ecclesia," is under His direction and control.

When God used the Greek word "Ecclesia" to describe His followers, it signified an assembly or congregation to the Jews. **"Ecclesia" had been used by Israel for many years to signify a united group of people under God's control.** In the Old Testament the Hebrew words for the gathering together of the Israelites are "edhah," which means "congregation;" and "qahal," which means "assembly." In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), "edhah" is almost always translated as "synagogue" (Strong's NT:4864), and "qahal" usually as "ecclesia" (Strong's NT:1577). Young states that "edhah" is "an appointed meeting," and "qahal" is "an assembly called together, a called and invited gathering."

To the Greeks, "ecclesia," meant the gathering together of the citizens of a town by an heralds trumpet, and according to Num 10v1-3, the Israelites were gathered together in this way. So when God used the word "ecclesia," it signified an assembly to His hearers. The Hebrew equivalents had been used by Israel to signify a united group of people under God's control. **God intended the Church, like Israel, to be under His permanent control, supervision and guidance.** In the Gospels Jesus only spoke twice of the "ecclesia;" in Matt 16v18, He speaks of the universal and complete Church; in Matt 18v17, He speaks of the local Church which can consist of as few as two or three Christians. We see from Matt 16v18, that there is a close connection between "the Kingdom of Heaven" and the "ecclesia." The "ecclesia" are not only God's assembly; they are the visible representatives of God on earth, and under His direct control and guidance. The direction and guidance of the Church should come from God, not from organisations, committees, or conferences directed and guided by men.

God's all-embracing Church compared with Judaism and the Jewish Synagogue.

The Christian Church, "ecclesia," was no longer only Jewish, it included every person of every nation who accepted Christ as his or her Saviour. Gal 3v26-29. God's worldwide Church fully embraced Gentiles which the Jews did not do. The use of the word "ecclesia" would distinguish Christ's people from the Jews in their synagogues; synagogue is from "syn," which means "together," and "ago," which means, "to bring." Though synagogue is used of a Christian meeting in James 2v2, Christ's words in Matt 16v18, give a strong hint of separation from the Jewish synagogue, for Jesus speaks of "My Church," as distinct from the Jewish synagogues. Christians gathered together and recognised Christ as their Lord, which the Jews certainly did not do. In Acts 19v32,39,41, the citizens of Ephesus formed an "ecclesia," that is, an assembly; the citizens of the kingdom of heaven should form an assembly in the locality where they live. **The Church is not the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God, it is part of that kingdom, and its visible representative upon earth, and it preaches the coming of that kingdom on earth. Let us never forget that the headquarters of the Church of Christ is in heaven, not upon earth.**

C) Church organisation is not a progressive Revelation.

Some would say that there is no systematic explanation of Church government in the Scriptures, and that Church government is a progressive revelation, which varies according the varying circumstance or need. **There may be no systematic and logical explanation of Church government in the Scriptures, but neither is there systematic teaching on other Christian doctrines and theology.** There are general principals and incidental references to Church government in the Scriptures, and these combined together give a clear picture of the early Church teaching on Church organisation. It is very difficult for many Christians to follow the formal prolonged doctrinal treatises and systematic theologies on Christian doctrine, as good and necessary as these may be. God, in His great wisdom, gave the basic truths of Christian doctrine simply, so that all can understand, and the Scriptural teaching on Church organisation is no exception.

The New Testament Scriptures give no support to the idea of organisational development. Indeed, these Scriptures condemn any deviation from their revelation. Gal 1v6-12, Jude v3,4. To believe in progressive revelation outside of the Scriptures, is a most dangerous doctrine, and it has led to many soul-destroying heresies, and a denial of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2Pet 2v1, 3v16. There are many cults today that have been founded on the claim of extra revelation outside of the Scriptures. **The Scriptures are the only foundation for Christian doctrine and practice.** These Scriptures are the revelations of God to His Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles and prophets, and the accounts of His dealings with mankind. Eph 2v20, 3v5. A church organisation that defies God's pattern cannot preserve the purity and power of the Church. The statement that progressive organisational development of the Church was necessary to preserve the Church from heresy and fanaticism has no support from Scripture or Christian experience. Church federation has nearly always led to persecution of godly Christians, and has caused far greater evils than it has cured. John 16v1-4, 2Tim 3v12.

Do we experience the essential heart of living truth, or do we have an empty outline of truth?

Paul uses the word "morphosin," in Rom 2v20 and 2Tim 3v5, to speak of "an outline of truth without the substance," the "morphosin" without the "morphe." In Rom 2v20, Paul says that it was folly for Jews to be proud of being chosen recipients of divine truth, when they did not obey that truth, or experience God and His truth. In 2Tim 3v5, Paul tells us to turn away from Christian forms which lack the reality and power of God. Though Scriptural constitutions and fundamental beliefs may give us a necessary outline and code of faith, they will not on their own preserve the purity of the Church. **We need a heart cry for mercy, earnest prayer, and a return to early Church practices, if we are to be preserved from error.** We can have correct rules of faith and conduct and resist the Holy Spirit. **Jesus said that we could only preserve our spiritual life only by abiding in Him and obeying His words.** The impartation of God's life comes from seeking God, and not from church constitutions, or even from a correct doctrinal outline of truth, as valuable and necessary as this can be.

It is a disturbing fact that the constitutions of men often deny, reject some vital Scripture truths, and their teaching on Church government. It is not so spiritually demanding to depend on an organisation, or follow a formal Church order and service. To recognise and follow our heavenly Father's directions and plans, and to have His love and power operating in our churches demands real humility, prayerfulness, and a close walk with God. This is directly opposite to man's carnal nature, for flesh dominated people love their own ways, and seek for power, position, prestige, influence and wealth. The unconsecrated carnal mind loves to build its own kingdom and say, "Is this not great Babylon that I have built?" and, "I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing." Dan 4v30, Rev 3v17. Many have decided against seeking God for a manifestation of His love and power, and have chosen instead, power, popularity, and influence within a religious structure. It can be difficult and frustrating for earnest Christians to operate or manifest the love and power of God through His spiritual gifts, in churches where the leadership manifests these wrong motives, and resists the Holy Spirit and His gifts.

Are we God's "Ecclesia," or are we only His "kuriakon?"

Our English word "church," like the Scottish "Kirk" and the German "quirt," is derived from the Greek "kuriakon," which means, "belonging to the Lord," or simply, "the Lord's." The adjective "kuriakon," only occurs twice in the New Testament, where it speaks of "the Lord's supper," and "the Lord's day." 1Cor 11v20, Rev1v10. In the New Testament the word "kuriakon" is not used in reference to Christian believers, instead it uses "ecclesia," which, as we have already seen, conveys not only the thought of a people belonging to God, but also a people under His direction and control. Church federation can take the control of the Church out of the hands of God and put it in the hands of men. Christians in such churches belong to God, but as they are so often under men's control instead of God's, it is more correct to call them by the word "kuriakon," than by the word "ecclesia." The belief in the progressive revelation of Church government, and the consequent development of church organisations, has proved to be an unmitigated disaster for Christ's Church. The evils that have come as a result of a departure from New Testament organisation, and the resultant affiliation and federation of churches, cannot be over-emphasised or exaggerated. The blood of the millions of Christian dead, who have been killed in the name of God, cry out against the religious kingdoms of men that have committed the sin of Cain. Gen 4v10,11, Jude v11.

The Churches Must Obey Jesus As Lord.

A) The early Church owned Christ's Lordship in Evangelism and Worship.

The Scriptures insist that Jesus is the Head of our churches, and so we should seek His will, plans and guidance, and not depend on our plans or programmes. Matt 18v18-20, 28v18-20, Eph 1v20-23, 4v7-16, 5v21-23, Phil 2v9-11, Col 1v18,19, 2v19, 3v9-11, Rev 19v16. The early Church at Jerusalem enjoyed the liberty, flexibility and power of the Holy Spirit in both fellowship and evangelism; this resulted in a great number of converts, and a considerable variety of content and great blessing in their fellowships meetings. It was not like so many modern Churches who extol Jesus as Lord, but do not obey Him, and please themselves in what they do. Peter learned by bitter personal experience that it was wise to obey his Lord; God cleansed him of his bigotry, and made him a great blessing. Acts 10v1-48.

Paul states that the Holy Spirit should direct our Church gatherings, and the person who is moved by the Holy Spirit has the right to minister. All rights in a church fellowship gathering should depend upon the direction and blessing of Christ, and rigid control of a meeting by one person should be unknown. The early church Pastors guided and taught each local church, but they certainly did not monopolise the ministry in a church, several believers could minister on a theme as the Lord led them, and other Christians ministered in "psalm, doctrine, tongue, revelation, or interpretation." 1Cor 14v26. Even the most spiritual and capable were not allowed to monopolise a meeting, they had to give way to others who had something from God, "Let the first hold his peace." 1Cor 14v29-31. The domination of ministry by one person denies Christ's Lordship over His Church. It is not till post-apostolic times and literature that we read of a presiding officer in the worship and fellowship meetings of the local churches. It is true

that Paul as an evangelist had a preaching hall and took the lead there as the principle speaker and debater, and he could and did take the major part in a special meeting for ministry, but he did not monopolise the local Church fellowships. Paul said that in the local Church fellowships, the Christians were to act as a body, and to minister to one another under the direction of the Holy Spirit and Christ. Acts 19v8-10, 20v6-12, 1Cor 12v4-27.

The presence of God through communion with Him is the secret of blessing and victory.

Moses was quite unwilling to lead Israel and fight her enemies without the presence, blessing and guidance of God, he had the sense to realise that it was only God's overshadowing providence that made Israel different from the surrounding nations. Exodus 33v11-20, NB v14, 34v5-9. **It was the presence and power of God that gave the early Church victory.** The acid test of our dependence upon God is the amount of time that we give to prayer and waiting upon God, as groups or individuals. True prayer is not the ability to say long prayers in public, God condemns this. Matt 6v5-15, 23v14, Mark 12v40, Luke 20v47. If we fail to earnestly seek God we shall be in the same lamentable spiritual state as the church at Laodicea. They were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;" but they did not know it. They said they had need of nothing, when they needed to seek Jesus and humbly ask Him to open their eyes and heal their pitiful spiritual condition. Rev 3v17-19. Those who really love God love His presence. Heb 11v5,6, Psalm 27 all, NB v4,8. Earnest and prolonged seeking of God is a searching test of ones spirituality and love of God. See how the early Church practised prayer and waiting upon God.

The verb "deomai." Luke 10v2, 21v36, 22v32, Acts 4v31, 10v2, 2Cor 8v4. The verb "erotao," Luke 16v27, John 14v16, 16v26, 17v9,15,20.

The verb "euchomai." Rom 9v3, 2Cor 13v7,9, James 5v16, 3John v2, Acts 26v29, 27v29.

The verb "proseuchomai." Luke 3v21, 5v16, 6v12,28, 9v28,29, 11v1,2, 18v1,10,11, 22v46, Acts 1v24, 6v6, 8v15, 9v11,40, 10v9,30, 11v5, 12v12, 13v3, 14v23, 16v25, 20v36, 21v5, 22v17, 28v8, Eph 6v18, Col 1v3,9, 4v3, 1Cor 14v13,14,15, 1Thess 5v17,25, 2Thess 1v11, 3v1, 1Tim 2v8, James 5v13,14,18, Jude v20.

The noun "deesis." Luke 1v13, 2v37, 5v33, Rom 10v1, 2Cor 1v11, 9v14, Phil 1v4,19, 2Tim 1v3, Heb 5v7, James 5v16, 1Pet 3v12.

The noun "enteuxis." (Intercession) 1Tim 4v5, plural in 2v1. **The noun "entugchano."** Rom 8v26,27,34, Heb 7v25.

The noun "proseuche." Matt 21v13,22, Luke 6v12, Acts 1v14, 2v42, 3v1, 6v4, 10v4,31, 12v5, 16v13,16, Rom 1v9, 12v12, 15v30, 1Cor 7v5, Eph 1v16, 6v18, Phil 4v6, Col 4v2,12, 1Thess 1v2, 5v5, Philemon v4,22, 1Pet 3v7, 4v7.

B) The variety and flexibility of a fellowship led by the Holy Spirit.

In the early Church there was flexibility under the guidance of God, in many modern churches the services are in a cast iron rut and routine, with a resultant spiritual deadness and bondage. **Paul's preaching in the Hall of Tyrannus was to non-Christians, here he preached and defended the Gospel; the Christian fellowship meetings took place in the homes of Christians. We need to clearly see the difference between an evangelistic mission and a Christian fellowship, where Christians are gathered together to build each other up in God.**

a) Informal Christian fellowship gatherings.

This consisted of prayer, praise and worship, conversational sharing of experience, discussion of problems and prayer for them, the manifestation of spiritual gifts, the study of the Scriptures, with all being able to comment, and a meal at which the Lord's Supper took place. In 1Cor 11v1 to 14v40, Paul is correcting disorders at the Lord's Supper, and showing them the correct way to conduct their gatherings for fellowship, prayer and worship. **The Last Supper conducted by Jesus gives us the divine order for Christian fellowship, as well as the celebration of the Lord's Supper.** There was a great blessing produced by the open and flexible informal fellowship meetings, which were under the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit. Nowadays, religious leaders exclude almost all ministry or participation from their flocks, and do not allow God to inspire Christians to give a contribution and to develop their ministries, and so ministries are often strangled at birth. **The ministries that do develop do so in spite of these religious systems, and not because of them.** No matter how competent a minister may be in preaching and pastoral work, he is a failure if he does not practice informal body ministry and develop ministries in the local church. God desires His children to develop ministries, not remain in permanent spiritual babyhood. Some will object to this participation in ministry by all Christians and say, "You open the door to fanatics and encourage the immature to make mistakes by your informal body ministry." To this I answer, "Informal body ministry is God's order, not mine."

Godly, wise, spiritual and gracious elders will preserve churches from the dangers of fanaticism, and gently correct the mistakes of the immature and inspire them to further effort. **We should not restrain profitable ministries,**

but unprofitable ministries should be restrained. Jesus has set ministries in the Church, but He has not relinquished the control of the Church to them, He is the Head of the Church. The substitution of Christ's Lordship over His Church and informal body ministry, with one-man ministry, cannot help but produce frustration, barrenness and division. Formal, spiritually lifeless services are as great an abuse of God's order as fanaticism, and are just as great an offence to God. There can only be real growth and blessing when the Holy Spirit is given His rightful place and ministry.

b) An informal evangelistic meeting.

This could take place in synagogues, the open air, hired building, or home; to large groups, or even to one person, like our Lord's conversation with the woman at the well. **There are instances of Jesus and Paul preaching sermons, however, the practice of informal discussion in synagogue, hall, home, or open-air, and the confirmation of the truth by miracles, was the usual Divine pattern for apostolic evangelism.** Rom 15v18-21. This informal evangelism was attractive to the outsider, and was anything but boring, which certainly cannot be said of many modern services, which often have to be endured rather than enjoyed. I am not thinking only of some traditional churches; the lightness and frivolity, spoken of in the King James Version of Jer 23v32, has afflicted many Pentecostal churches. "Lightness," is "pachazuwth," (Strong's: OT6350), frivolity, from (Strong's: OT6348), "pachaz," to bubble up or froth. See 2Cor 1v17, "elaphria," (Strong's: NT1644), levity. **God wants us to enjoy His presence and the fellowship of other Christians in profound depth; this will fill us with "joy unspeakable and full of glory."** 1Pet 1v8.

Jesus and His apostles expected to be questioned or interrupted while preaching, and they experienced this regularly, indeed, it was the norm. In their proclaiming the gospel as an herald, "kerusso," Acts 8v5, 9v26, 10v37,42, 15v21, 19v13, 20v25, 28v36; or telling and announcing good news, "euangelizo," Acts 5v42, 8v4,12,35,40, 10v36, 11v20, 14v15, 15v35, 17v18; they "talked and discoursed," "laleo," Acts 8v25, 11v19, 13v42, 14v25, 16v6; they told thoroughly, "katangello," Acts 4v2, 13v5,38, 15v36, 17v3,13, 1Cor 9v14; they often did this in a conversational style by reasoning, questions and even heated debate, "suzeteo," Mark 8v11, 12v28, Luke 24v15,32, Acts 6v9, 9v29; and dialogue, "dialegomai," Acts 17v2,17, 18v4,19, 19v8,9, 20v7,9, 24v12,25 (also occurs Mark 9v34, Heb 12v5, Jude v9). See also "peitho," to persuade," Acts 13v43, 14v19, 18v4, 19v8,26, 26v28, 28v23, 2Cor 5v11. **The best method of evangelism, preaching and teaching is by informal discussion, dialogue and persuasion in friendly and amiable conversations with people.**

The early Church Christians did not invite people to hear the Gospel and sit passively and mutely until an appeal was made; they preached the Gospel in the open air, in their daily contacts, and from house to house, and those who were converted joined their Christian fellowships. Acts 5v42, 8v4. Inviting unbelievers to meetings is not normal New Testament evangelism, the early Church went out to preach the Gospel. **The miraculous was the cutting edge of New Testament evangelism,** in Rom 15v18,19, Paul said that he made the Gentiles receive and obey the Gospel "by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." Formal Church services will certainly not meet the needs of this modern generation, we need the greater apostolic and evangelistic ministries to win converts and break the ground for the witness of the ordinary church members. The informal New Testament meetings for fellowship, under the blessing and guidance of the Holy Spirit, will sustain those who come to know Jesus as their Saviour. This Divine pattern is suitable, and will be successful, with every age and nation. When Jesus is owned as Lord, the Church is victorious in both evangelism and worship.

C) The New Testament ministry gifts are appointed by God, not by men.

The ministries that God sets in the Church are based on His spiritual gifting and not on natural talent or ability. **The early Church turned the world upside down by spiritual ministry gifts from God, not by their natural talents, and it is these ministry gifts that the Church needs so badly today, not more money, machinery, or better education.** These ministry gifts are the result of divine sovereignty, not human desire, or ordination. God sets these gifts and ministries in the Church, and Jesus directs them. Matt 9v38, 1Cor 12v28, Eph 4v8-11.

Ordination, is it from Heaven, or from men? Matt 21v25, Mark 11v30, Luke 20v4.

Some object to the statement that ordination to ministry comes from heaven, and not from men, and state that elders, deacons, and even apostles, had hands laid upon them to appoint them to a ministry. This was undoubtedly true, however, this appointment to God's work, was really the recognition of the gift and call already received from God, and which was already manifested in their ministries. **The laying on of hands by men is an empty formality without the divine ordination and gifting of God.** The religious leaders who killed Jesus were certainly not ordained by God, they resisted God. Acts 7v51-53. In God's eyes a person has authority in Christ's Church, not because men will it, or because a person has received ecclesiastical training or ordination, but because He Himself has given them a ministry.

The modern term "ordination" has come to have a technical significance not found in the New Testament. The Greek words translated as "ordain" in the Authorised Version simply mean, "to appoint, choose and set apart." Acts 6v5,6, 13v2,3, 14v23, 1Tim 2v7, 4v14, 5v22, 2Tim 1v6. Modern denominations have replaced God's ordination and Christ's commission, with their ordaining councils. I recognise that ordaining councils do choose people who have had a call from God. However, it is also true that many people are ordained to lead in God's work, who have no call or right to do so, and many others who have received a definite commission from Christ are excluded and rejected. **Very few of our modern denominations would have ordained any of the twelve apostles, even though they are so highly regarded by religious leaders today.** Many Church leaders today reject the miraculous powers that the apostles experienced, and oppose those who manifest the same spiritual gifts. **These religious leaders, as in Christ's day, extol the prophets of the past, but oppose the same kind of ministries in the present.** Matt 23v29-39. The apostles of Christ's day were looked upon as deluded, undesirable, unlearned and ignorant men, by the religious leaders of Israel. Christ's apostles had not been taught in the schools of the Rabbis, but they were certainly not unlearned or ignorant in regard to hearing and obeying the voice of God. The apostles were lacking in men's ecclesiastical training, but God Himself had trained them in the essentials of true religion.

Systematic traditional training often disqualifies one from divine ordination.

God did not choose any of the learned Rabbis that men had ordained, the systematic training in men's traditions had made them entirely unsuitable for leadership in Christ's Church. Christ's apostles had the essentials of true religion, faith, hope, love, humility, a love for Jesus, and a thirst for God, and so God chose these simple, earnest, and spiritual young men to lead His Church. Young men, who have received spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries from God, have an important part to play in Christ's Church today. The apostles were chosen by God, and not by men, or by themselves; even Jesus did not appoint Himself. 1Cor 12v18,28, Heb 5v1-10. **It was ordination from heaven that counted.**

Giving people the names of the New Testament offices will not give them that ministry, a person has to have a ministry from God, or they are an empty pretender. In the New Testament it was the actual ministry of a person that decided what they were called. They were not just called apostles, prophets, pastor-teachers, and evangelists, they possessed and manifested these ministries, and they were clearly seen and recognised by the members of the churches. **You can label "treacle," as "best quality jam," but it is still "treacle;" an empty claim to New Testament ministry gifts is even more foolish and wrong.**

Denominational closed-shop ministries often oppose divinely given ministries.

The early Church ministry was not a closed denominational shop. The ministerial certificate of the early Church was a ministry gift from Christ, which was accredited by signs, wonders and miracles. **It is sad that ecclesiastical machinery has replaced God's empowerment in many denominations, and this is a major reason for the lack of revival.**

The elders who pastored and taught the local churches were ordained by Paul, not by his own feelings, it was because they were seen to possess a ministry gift from Christ. The Holy Spirit had given these ministries and made them overseers in their churches. Their ministries were actually in operation in the local churches before Paul appointed them; it was purely a matter of recognising these divinely given ministries. Acts 20v28-32. The seven deacons at Jerusalem were chosen by the people for their spiritual ministry as well as their wisdom and godly character. They were well-known and well-trusted by all the Christians, not only on the grounds of their wisdom, graciousness, godly character, and ability to "show mercy;" they were also "full of the Holy Spirit," and possessed a definite spiritual ministry. Deacons should not only be gentle and kind, and good people of "good reputation," they must be "full of faith and the Holy Ghost." Acts 6v3,5,8.

The early Church recognised and appointed local people to Church leadership.

When the local church was founded and the elders appointed, the local church recognised and appointed other ministries that the Holy Spirit had given and developed in the church. The local church appointed Timothy, and the elders laid hands on him and asked God to bless him. They recognised that his ministry had developed sufficiently for Timothy to take his place among the ministries of the local church. 1Tim 4v12-16, 2Tim 1v6. When Paul wrote his letters to Timothy, he was between 35 and 40 years of age. **Local elders did not resent developing ministries in their churches, they glorified God for them; and if God gave some younger Christian in the local church a greater ministry than any one else in it, the elders particularly rejoiced, because this was the fruit of their oversight and proof that their ministry was a success.** It is a bitter, sour, Saul-like spirit of jealousy that looks upon developing ministries in the local church as a threat to one's authority. 1Sam 18v6-14. Love greatly rejoices when others are blessed more than themselves, and heartily thanks God for the part that He has given them in developing these ministries, and the part that they have to play in God's work. 1Cor 13v4-7.

Paul appointed local people as leaders whose life and ministry gift were recognised, appreciated and loved by the people in the local church. **The question seems to have been, “Who do you have confidence in to lead you?”** After Paul had appointed the first elders in the local church, the appointment of other elders was left in the hands of the local elders and Christians; they knew the spiritual qualifications that were necessary for a man to be an elder or deacon, because Paul had instructed them in this matter. 1Tim 3v1-16, Titus 1v4-16, James 5v13-18. **Paul and the other itinerant ministries exercised a spiritual oversight and moral authority over the local churches, but they did not take the control of the churches out of the hands of the elders, or interfere with their decisions, each church was responsible to God for its own work.** The apostles exercised the oversight of love and fellowship, not of official position, their work was to start churches, and then to instruct and inspire the flocks and develop their ministries, not to dominate, or dictate to them. Eph 4v8-14, 1Pet 5v1-7.

D) The ministries God gives can only be sustained by communion with God.

We must follow the glory cloud.

The New Testament ministries can only be sustained by communion with God. We see in the Scriptures that God gave His authority to those who followed His leadings and commands. Moses was Israel’s leader, but he did not lead them in his way and will, he obeyed God’s orders. God led Israel through His glory cloud, Moses had the good sense to obey God’s directions, and follow His glory cloud. This same is true of the New Testament ministries, only those who have a ministry of divine life and follow the glory cloud, who have the right of leadership and authority in Christ’s Church. 1Cor 12v28, Acts 10v38.

We can be channels of God’s love and power.

Jesus earnestly desires us to be channels of His love and power, He longs to pour His mercy, tenderness, truth, delivering power, and deep affection through us to others, but this can only happen when we abide in Christ. John 15v1-17. No one is a true minister of Christ who does not minister His love, mercy and power to others. It is not enough to preach truth; truth must minister God’s power, life and love to needy souls and bodies. 1Pet 1v12. All the ministry gifts are intended to minister the love, power and grace of God to God’s flock and to knit it together in love. The ministry of elders is particularly pastoral; however, the Lord Jesus told the young apostle Peter, that pastoral ministry was included in his apostolic ministry. John 21v15-19. **The ministry gifts should reveal Christ and the Father to people.** Gal 1v15,16. **A spiritual ministry does not just teach doctrine, it brings people into a living experience of God.**

The development, extension, and interdependence of spiritual ministries.

The ministry gifts Jesus gives are capable of development and extension. Stephen and Philip were ordained to be deacons, because the church recognised that their spirituality, godliness and love for people, proved that they had a ministry from Christ to fulfil that work. Jesus also ordained them to be fervent evangelists, and they had a double ministry. We read in Acts 13v1,2, that Paul and Barnabus possessed teaching ministries in the church at Antioch, then God made them apostles. They had received a previous call to this work, “Separate me Barnabus and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” They had faithfully prepared for this work by fulfilling a pastoral and teaching ministry, and so the call became a reality, and God sent them out on an apostolic mission. They were not sent out at their own desire or man’s direction, they were sent out by the Holy Spirit, God confirmed the reality of their call through other prophets and teachers.

In Acts 13v1,2, we see that the ministry gifts were directed by God, but they were not independent of other Christians, they worked together, as should all the parts of the body of Christ. Even apostles needed helpers, and the comfort and spiritual help of other Christians, a striking example of this is in 2Cor 2v12-14, where Paul states that he was incapacitated because Titus was not there, and so was not able to take advantage of God’s door of opportunity. See also Acts 12v11,12, 21v4,11,12, 28v12-15, 1Cor 8v6, 2Cor 8v16-24, Eph 6v21,22, Phil 2v25, 1Thess 3v1,2, 2Tim 4v9-13,20,21, Titus 1v5, 3v12,13. We read in Acts 15v32, that Silas was a prophet, but when he went with Paul, God gave him the additional authority and ministry of an apostle. 1Thess 1v1 with 2v6. Peter was an apostle, but Jesus also gave him the office of Pastor and Elder as well. John 21v15-19, 1Pet 5v1-5. So we can see that one person can have several ministries given to them by Christ. God usually founded local churches through apostolic or evangelistic ministry, and then He developed ministries in this church. Every ministry working together and operating under the guidance of Christ the Lord.

E) God still sets these ministries in the Church today.

God has “set” spiritual ministries and their accompanying spiritual gifts in the Church all through this age of grace, and He still sets them in the Church today, when He can find those who love God and people enough, to desire to be

channels of His power and love. The word for "set" in 1Cor 12v28, is "etheto" the third person singular aorist indicative of "tithemi," it is the same word that is used in John 15v16, which is translated "ordained." It simply means, "to put, place, or appoint." See Acts 5v25, Matt 5v15, 1Tim 1v12, 2v7, 2Tim 1v11, Heb 1v2, etc.. **God has permanently placed these gifts in His Church during this age.** Those who say that these miraculous ministries of the Church no longer exist, resist this ordination and gifting by God. The truth is that they do not have the spiritual qualifications to manifest these ministries, and are unwilling to expend the spiritual effort necessary to receive these qualifications, and to keep these ministries. They fear the opposition that comes against such ministries. **It is spiritually demanding to seek God for His plans and power, but there is little spiritual effort required to rely upon oratory, good music, and a pleasant program of services, and so men have replaced God's abilities and ministries with their own standards, abilities and ministries.** This unwillingness to follow the example of the early church, and obey God's command to desire spiritual gifts, is a grave sin, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." 1Sam 15v23. It is certainly not Scriptural to say that spiritual gifts ceased after the apostolic age, as the following facts prove.

1) Peter said that spiritual gifts would continue to the end of this age.

In Acts 2v16-21, Peter confirmed the prophecy of Joel that spiritual gifts would continue right up to the great and terrible day of the Lord, the day of Christ's return. Rev 16v14-16, 6v12-17, Matt 24v29-31. Peter insists that the gift of the Holy Spirit is for all, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2v38,39. There is no Scripture to contradict or limit the prophecy of Joel; indeed, both Scripture and Christian experience confirm this prophecy. Those who deny that spiritual gifts are for today have looked in vain for one clear Scriptural statement that spiritual gifts were withdrawn after the apostolic age. They have wrested and distorted 1Cor 13v8-13 in an attempt to justify their unbelief, and have made the quite unwarranted assumption that the, "that which is perfect," at which the gifts of the Holy Spirit are to pass away, was the completion of the canon of Scripture. Honest theologians state that there is no justification for this interpretation. Ellicott says of the "that which is perfect," "This verse shows, by the emphatic "then," that the time when the gifts shall cease is at the end of this dispensation. The imperfect shall not cease until the perfect is brought in."

"A New Testament Commentary," edited by Howley, Bruce and Ellison, states on 1Cor 13v10, that there is no support in the Biblical usage of "perfect," or its cognate forms, for the suggestion that "the perfect" refers to the completion of the Scripture canon, and that the interpretation of "that which is perfect" as the Scripture canon, has been made to explain away the absence of certain spiritual gifts from their churches. How illuminating! An examination of 1Cor 13v10, proves that it is totally untrue to say that "that which is perfect" is the Scripture canon.

a) The subject under discussion in 1Cor 13 is love in relation to the whole of Christian experience.

Paul includes giving, martyrdom and knowledge, as well as spiritual gifts; there is no mention of the Scriptural canon. Paul's theme is love, he does not close 1Cor 13 with the greatest of these is the Scriptural canon," he says, "the greatest of these is love." "That which is perfect," occurs at the coming of the kingdom of God, when we have a face-to-face vision of the God of love. 1Cor 13v12. The Christian enjoys this kingdom at death, 2Cor 5v6-8, Phil 1v21-23, Heb 12v22-24, Rev 6v9-11, but this endless kingdom of love will not come to earth until the return of Jesus on the great "day of the Lord," at the end of this age.

b) How can it be the Scripture canon if "full knowledge" has not been given and perfected?

It is certainly inconsistent and dishonest to say that 1Cor 13v8 informs us that spiritual gifts have passed away, and yet admit that our present partial knowledge has not yet been replaced by the full knowledge of God's kingdom. This verse makes it quite clear that the "perfect day," when "that which is perfect" comes, is when God's kingdom comes to earth. It is only then that we shall have the full knowledge of ourselves and others, and "we shall fully know as we are fully known." This "full knowledge" occurs at the judgement seat of Christ, when our works and character are revealed. 1Cor 3v11-15.

The time when the gifts "pass away," is when the Church of Christ on earth exchanges its present partial spiritual power and knowledge, for the complete and perfect "face to face" experience of God and the "full knowledge" of His power, truth and love. What 1Cor 13v8, is really teaching, is that the Church on earth can expect its spiritual gifts and limited knowledge to continue, until they are superseded by, and swallowed up in the experience and knowledge of God's kingdom. When 1Cor 13v8 is really fulfilled, the Church will be glorified in Heaven and enjoying God's glory, power, truth and love to the full.

c) Paul compares his own Christian experience on earth with that of the perfect day.

Paul compares his experience of God on earth with that in heaven to a non-speaking baby's experience with that of

an intelligent man. This certainly does away with the idea that Paul is referring to the Scripture canon, when he speaks of the perfect day, for Paul even knew truth outside of the New Testament canon, truth he was not permitted to utter. 2Cor 12v1-4. Paul knew by revelation much, if not all, of the truth contained in the book of Revelation, for he speaks of the trumpets, 1Cor 15v51-53; of the evil career of Antichrist and his judgement, 2Thess 2v1-12; of the two resurrections and the last judgement. 1Cor 15v21-28. The lack of the future knowledge of the condition of the churches in Revelation did not make Paul "a none speaking babe," he knew the vast preponderance of New Testament truth. Indeed, Paul knew more of God's truth in theory and experience than any person who has ever lived, except the Lord Jesus. 1Cor 15v10.

Having the full New Testament canon does not make us superior in knowledge to Paul, indeed, in comparison to Paul, we are the babes. The illustrations that Paul used of a non-speaking babe compared with a man, and a dull reflection in contrast with a face-to-face vision, only makes sense if they are interpreted in the clear sense of the context, as a comparison of our present earthly experience of God now, compared with our experience of God in His kingdom. The only things that will bear any comparison with Heaven, and are the same in Heaven as on earth, are faith, hope and love; our present knowledge is nothing compared to the knowledge of Heaven. Paul said that his partial knowledge was to cease and pass away when the complete came, so it cannot be the canon of Scripture, for we still need all of it until Jesus comes. Those who insist on interpreting, "that which is perfect," as the Scripture canon, end up with a great many contradictions and difficulties, a proof of wrong exposition.

d) Notice how Paul tells the Corinthians after 1Cor 13, to desire spiritual gifts.

Paul does not say that they did not need to bother with spiritual gifts any more because they were soon to finish; he gives them the correct teaching on the gifts, and tells them to seek them for their spiritual welfare. 1Cor 14v1-3,12,18,39. Spiritual gifts profit and built up Christians, they carry on the ministry of Christ, and meet great needs in the body of Christ. Isaiah 53v10, 1Cor 12v7,18-31. **Both Israel and the Church have always needed God's power, as well as God's truth, to meet the needs placed before them.**

e) In 1Cor 13, Paul considers spiritual gifts and the other principal aspects of our experience in relation to love.

Paul speaks of "ALL sacred secrets and ALL knowledge," the ultimate in sacrificial giving, and martyrdom for God's sake, as well as spiritual gifts. The knowledge mentioned is not just supernatural knowledge; it is "all knowledge" and includes Scriptural knowledge. Even divinely inspired truth will be nothing compared with the face-to-face meeting with God its author. There is no Scripture that gives stronger evidence that spiritual gifts will continue right up to the end of this age, than Paul's statement in 1Cor 13, that spiritual gifts will continue right up to this face to face meeting with God.

2) Spiritual gifts occurred throughout the Old Testament dispensations in periods of revival.

This was usually when there were people willing to receive them and seek God for them. **If spiritual gifts were manifested throughout the age of Law, should they not be manifested throughout the age of grace, during which the Spirit of God is said to work in greater measure and with greater manifestations, than He did in the age of Law.** Heb 8v10-13, 2Cor 3v6-18. The Scriptures tell us that the new covenant was to be more glorious and more full of the Holy Spirit's workings throughout all its duration than the age of the Law.

There is no Scriptural justification for the statement that signs, wonders and miracles could only be expected at the start of the age of grace. Acts 2v16-21,38,39. To say that we could not expect miracles after the apostles finished their ministries, would mean that the age of grace was less spiritually powerful than the age of Law, a statement the Scripture absolutely refutes. **The cause of the lack of spiritual gifts in this age of grace is the same as it was in the previous age of Law, spiritual apathy, backsliding, low or non-existent faith, and the lack of love for needy mankind.** Gideon had the sense to realise that when God was with you, miracles took place. Judges 6v13. The Jews required a sign of spiritual authority from any prophet; they knew that if God commissioned anyone, He gave them the spiritual power and authority to manifest spiritual gifts. 1Cor 1v22. All New Testament ministries, including elders, were expected to manifest spiritual gifts. 1Cor 12v28, James 5v13-19. If God manifested spiritual gifts throughout "the ministration of death," that is, the Law, how much more will He do it during, "the ministration of the Spirit?" 2Cor 3v6-11. The New Testament dispensation is promised, and possesses, more gifts from God than the Law, not less. All thirsty believers in Christ can receive the Holy Spirit's power and fullness. John 7v37-39.

3) All spiritual gifts must be here if all have not gone.

Those who insist that spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries are not for today must insist that God has removed them all, not just some, if they are to be consistent. If they believe that spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries are not for

today, then they must not pray for divine healing, this is a gift of healing; they must not pray for guidance or illumination upon a problem, this is a word of wisdom; they must not pray for God's anointing upon ministry or for Satan's power to be lifted from people's lives or minds, or for people to be blessed, this is a gift of faith; they must not pray for material needs to be met, this is a working of miracles; they must not pray for a revelation of God to the soul, this is a discerning of spirits; they must not pray for an inspired utterance from God, this is a prophecy; they must not pray for inspired praying, this is the prime use of the gift of tongues.

Those who say that spiritual gifts have ceased, often actually pray for the manifestation of spiritual gifts. Christians who say that spiritual gifts are not for today are really unwilling to seek God for those gifts; they refuse to submit to the experience that God desires to give them. They are not prepared to accept the full Scriptural standard, or the Lordship or wisdom of Christ over these spiritual gifts. **Those who reject spiritual gifts completely would in reality totally remove God's influence from His Church.** If God only works through His word today, as some insist, there is no point in the ministries of the Holy Spirit at all. Paul clearly states in 1Cor 12v21, that we cannot say that we have no need of these ministries and gifts, they are all essential, if Christ's body is to function as He intends. It is only difficult for Christians to witness effectively if God's gifts and ministries are missing.

Some would say, "I believe in God's power and influence, but how can you be sure that you will get the Holy Spirit and not some evil spirit?" We answer that true Christians believe the promise of Christ, that they cannot receive any false spirit or gift, if they are seeking God for His gifts and blessing. Indeed, the Scriptures emphatically state that it is only by seeking God for His power and gifts that we can be spiritually safe, and successfully resist the Devil; we certainly can't outwit or defeat Satan on our own. Psalm 24v3-6, 27v1-14, 42v1-11, 46v10, 62v1,2, Acts 1v14, 2v42, 3v1, 4v29-33, 6v2-4, 8v14-17, 9v11,12, 10v2,9-20, 12v5,12, 13v1-4, etc. Eph 6v10-20, James 4v7-10, 1Pet 5v5-11. etc. **Those who refuse to seek God's power for fear of receiving some false spirit, have in reality already been defeated by Satan, and have shown a lack of faith in God's ability to care for His children. Satan kept Israel out of Canaan through fear and unbelief; they could not trust God to look after them. Indeed, the Scriptures reveal that it has always been those who have failed to seek God for His blessing and spiritual gifts, who have been influenced by evil spirits.** Heb 3 and 4. Let us see, then:

F) The distinguishing characteristics of God's Spirit-Filled children.

a) God's children believe God's promise of blessing for them.

God has given many "exceeding great and precious promises" that tell us that He will give us spiritual blessing and spiritual gifts, those who deny that the miraculous is for today, don't have a Scriptural leg to stand on. All the promises of God are still "yea" and "Amen" in Christ Jesus, and we can still experience God's love, gifts and power today. 2Cor 1v17-20. It is certainly not honest or consistent to believe in a Christianity that has none of the New Testament love, life, and power. Just as the body is dead without the spirit, so is an intellectual Christianity that is devoid of the movings of the Holy Spirit. James 2v26. Christianity is not a doctrinal exercise; it is an experience of God. **Those who refuse to accept that spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries are for today, make Christianity an intellectual exercise over God's dealings in the past, instead of a living experience of God and His gifts in the present.** God's children should accept God's promises to them, not try to find an excuse for not seeking or receiving them, by wresting the Scriptures.

b) God's children earnestly seek and love God's presence.

Those who have clean hands and pure hearts love to seek God, "this is the generation of them that seek Him," Psalm 24v3-6. True Christians, like David, love to wait upon and seek God. Psalm 40v1, 62v1,5. Their hearts pant for Him. Psalm 42v1-3. The last thing that heretics and apostates want to experience is the overwhelming presence of God, but true Christians long for it. The early Church loved to seek God and spent hours and days doing it. There is a vast difference between a short prayer aimed at the hearers, and the prolonged and earnest seeking of God that we see in the New Testament. False cults may say short prayers, but they will not spend time in prolonged seeking of God, for the evil spirits that influence them, will not allow them to do this. False cults are under the influence of evil spirits, and in Deut 18v9-19, we see that seeking God and true and full recognition of Christ is diametrically opposite to seeking or pursuing evil spirits. Lev 19v31, 20v6, Isaiah 8v19-20. Prolonged, earnest seeking of God is an acid test of one's source of inspiration. Heb 11v6, 1John 4v1-6.

c) God's children manifest God's character and love in their lives.

Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Matt 7v15-23. This does not mean the size or growth of a church organisation. True Christianity does not consist of statistics or empty talk, but rather of consecration to God, purity of life, and love of people. Paul warned those of the Corinthians, who were living deplorable lives, that they had no knowledge of God. 1Cor 15v34. It is true that even godly men, like David or Peter, may fail God badly under heavy

temptation, but this is totally different from the sinful wallowing in the mire spoken of in 2Pet 2v1-22, Jude v3-25 and Rev 2v13-16,20-24. **Christian love and purity cannot be truly counterfeited or imitated by Satan's children.** Hypocrites may pretend and play-act, but "agape" love is inimitable and incomparable. Christians will not only die for their brethren, but also for their enemies. 1John 5v1,2, 2v1-22, Matt 5v43-48.

d) God's children believe the truths in God's Word.

Another acid test of a person's source of inspiration is whether they conform to the fundamental doctrines of Scripture. If the Holy Spirit moves a person, their doctrines and practices will be the same as those of the early Church. When a person is taken over by an evil spirit, their doctrine is corrupted and bears no resemblance to New Testament truth. John said that those who are inspired of God believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah, and that He has come in human flesh, whereas those who are inspired by Satan reject this. The Messiah of the Old Testament is "The Mighty God," Hebrew, "El Gibbor," an exclusive title of Jehovah. Isaiah 9v6, 10v21, Jer 32v18. He is "God with us." Isaiah 7v14 with Matt 1v23. Many Scriptures state that Jesus is the eternal Creator God of the Old Testament.

A person's source of inspiration is revealed by their attitude to Jesus, those who reject His deity, humanity, atonement, and teaching, are moved by Satan, those who accept them are inspired by God. The personal appropriation of Christ's sacrifice for sin is always the cleavage point between Divine and Satanic doctrine. Rev 12v10-12. We know and rejoice in the experience of redemption by Jesus from the penalty and power of sin. False cults reject the Christian teaching about sin and judgement, and state that personal redemption by Christ's blood is unnecessary. False cults either reject completely the idea of a personal God, or so pervert the idea of God that He is unrecognisable as the Christian's God. Many false prophets address prayers to God and Christ, but they distort the doctrine of Christ, and preach "another Jesus, ---and another gospel," and are "accursed." 2Cor 11v3,4, 1John 4v1-5,15, 2v11,23, 5v1, Matt 7v15-29, Gal 1v8,9.

e) God's children desire to answer Satan's lying wonders with God's miracles.

How illogical and inconsistent it is to say that the Almighty God no longer does any miracles, and only Satan does miracles today. God is a God that only does wonders, and His children should do the same by His power. Exodus 3v20, 15v11, Job 9v10, Psalm 77v11,14, 136v4, Isaiah 8v18, Acts 4v22,43, Rom 4v2,3, Heb 2v4. God has not left all the miracle-working to Satan during this age, God has promised miracles throughout this age, and that this age will close with the greatest show of spiritual power the world has ever seen, God's two witnesses have amazing spiritual gifts given to them to answer Satan's lying wonders through the Antichrist. Rev 11v1-12, 2Thess 2v7-12. **None of the prophets or apostles vindicated God merely by talk; God confirmed the truth of their words through signs, wonders and miracles.**

G) The financially undemanding structure of the early church ministries.

The itinerant ministries enjoyed some measure of support from the churches, but the churches did not direct them, nor did they control the churches. Acts 13v1-4, 16v6,16, Phil 4v10-19, 3Jn v5-11. In the early churches there was no local church buildings, or centrally governed denomination into which funds were sent, and which kept the preachers of the Gospel with a fixed income. In the Bible we see individual faith in God, not faith in an organisation. Ministers in a modern church organisation can expect some measure of security without trusting and depending on God. Few modern ministers would be prepared to accept the financial insecurity and poverty of Christ and His early Church ministries. Matt 8v19,20, Luke 9v57,58, Acts 3v6, 2Cor 8v9. A sacrificial cross was an essential part of New Testament ministry. Matt 10v38, 16v24. The Lord Jesus chose men who were prepared to trust God over their finances, the idea of a group of Christians building a church building, and supporting their minister, was unknown in the early Church. The pastor-elders of the early Church usually worked and kept themselves, those who had devoted themselves to study and Church responsibilities, and were financially embarrassed as a result, received gifts from the local church, but usually on the level of financial aid given to the poorest in the church. 1Tim 5v17,18, 1Pet 5v1,2. The itinerant ministries also received gifts and hospitality to meet their needs, or like Paul they worked to meet their own essential needs. 1Cor 9v1-19, 2Cor 11v8,9, Phil 4v10-19. **The vast majority of the finances collected by the early churches were for the poor, and these collections for the poor are totally different from the disgraceful and corrupt appeals for money that we often see in our day from some so-called Christian ministries.** John 12v5,6,8, 13v29, Acts.2v44,45, 4v32-37, 2Cor 8v1-9, Rom 16v17,18.

Hatch writes on page 147 and 148 of his Bampton Lectures on "The Organisation of the Early Christian Churches:"

"The funds of the primitive communities had consisted entirely of voluntary offerings. Of these offerings those officers whose circumstances required it were entitled to a share. They received such a share only on the grounds of

poverty. They were, so far, in the position of the widows and orphans and helpless poor. Like soldiers in the Roman army, or slaves in a Roman household, they were entitled to a monthly allowance. The amount of that allowance was variable. When the Montanists proposed to pay their clergy a fixed salary the proposal was condemned as a heretical innovation, alien to Catholic practice. (Eusebius H.E.5.18.2.: 5.28.10). Those who could supplemented their allowances by farming or by trade. There was no sense of incongruity in their doing so. The Apostolical Constitutions repeat with emphasis the apostolic injunction, 'If any man would not work, neither should he eat.' (Const. Apost.2.62. 2Thess 3v10,12, 1Thess 4v11). Those who could supplemented their allowances by farming or trade. There is no early trace of the later idea that buying and selling, handicraft and farming, were inconsistent with the office of a Christian minister. The bishops and presbyters of those early days kept banks, practised medicine, wrought as silversmiths, tended sheep, or sold their goods in open market. They were like the non-juring bishops a century and a half ago (about 1730), or like the early preachers of the Wesleyan Methodists. They were men of the world taking part in the ordinary business of life. The point about which the Christian communities were anxious was, not that their officers should cease to trade, but that in this as in other respects, they should be examples to the flock." End of quote.

Hatch continues in his notes at the bottom of page 148, to tell how the leaders of the primitive Church usually worked, he states; - "Among the latter are the case of Spiridion who tended sheep in Cyprus, ---of a bishop who was a weaver at Maiuma, ---of one who was a shipbuilder in Campania---one who practised in the law courts, ---of a presbyter who was a silversmith at Ancyra. --- Basil, Epist.198 (263), vol.4 p.290) speaks of the majority of his clergy as earning their living by sedentary handicrafts, and Epiphanius, ---speaks of others doing it in order to earn money for the poor." End of quote.

All Christians are priests in the eyes of God: 1Pet 2v5,9, Rev 1v6, 5v10, 20v6.

The early Church Christian ministry was not looked upon as priesthood, in the sense of ministers alone having a priestly authority and power. God has made all Christians members of "a royal priesthood," and "kings and priests unto God." When two or three Christians gather together (Matt 18v20), they make up a church, even if no church ministries are present. There is only one High Priest of Christianity, our Lord Jesus. The early church at Jerusalem shows us that God intended His Church to be a voluntary fellowship of Christians, who are united by love for Christ and one another, and free from priest craft, despotism, or dictatorship.

Authority or Insubordination?

The Scribes and Pharisees challenged both John Baptist and Christ as to the source of their authority; they looked upon them as insubordinate rebels, and divisive troublemakers. The Church of Jesus has always had the same problem; Christ's heaven-sent ministries have always been looked upon as "insubordinate" and "divisive," by people who are determined to preserve their religious power structure and position. The apostles were insubordinate to men, but obedient to God; the Scribes and Pharisees were obedient to men but insubordinate to God. Dissension always comes between those who seek influence from men, and those who seek authority from heaven. Authority from Heaven is not decided by human opinion; it is proved by divine gifting and conformity to Biblical teaching and experience. The people who murdered Jesus claimed that they had been given authority from God to kill Him; this false claim to Divine authority has been repeated again and again in Church history, by those who have murdered many dear children of God, who had received a definite authority from God. Indeed, it almost seems impossible not to be called a heretic by men, when you have God's authority, and we should certainly doubt if our calling and ministry is from God, when all men speak well of us. Matt 5v10-12, 23v19-39, Luke 6v26.

The Early Church was Guided by Christ into Body Ministry.

The Church is described as Christ's building and temple, Eph 2v21; as Christ's beloved bride and wife, Eph 5v22,23, Rev 19v6,7, 21v2,9, 22v17; as Christ's household. Eph 2v19, Gal 4v10, 1Tim 3v14, Heb 3v5, However, here I want to consider the Church as Christ's body. 1Cor 12v11-31, Rom 12v3-5, Eph 4v7-11. Christ desires all the members of His Church, from apostles to young converts, to act together as a body under His guidance. Under the inspiration of Christ every member has something to contribute to the spiritual ministry of the Church, this is what we mean by body ministry.

1) Body ministry took place in fellowship, worship, evangelism and ministry.

Body ministry involves the participation of all believers in fellowship, worship, evangelism and ministry. **There was no division between clergy and laity in the early Church, all believers are priests.** 1Pet 2v5, Rev 1v6. Every child of God has the right to minister what they receive from God. "Everyone hath,"---"ye may all prophesy one by one." 1Cor 14v26,31. Paul said that the Corinthians had the right idea in desiring body ministry, but they selfishly wanted to do everything, and did not make way for other people's ministries. **Paul said we need a Holy-Spirit co-ordinated body ministry, not all-ministry.** All rights in the Church spring from Christ; the Quaker principle is

correct, members have the right to minister only as Christ directs. The prophets and pastor-teachers in the local church should only act under the inspiration of Christ, like the rest of the believers. This is spiritually much more demanding than a program. It also demands real humility and gentleness in the pastor-elders, who may have to call a halt to unprofitable ministry, or correct wrong teaching and fanaticism.

In many churches, Christians are judged to be faithful and true by their ministers, if they sit passively in their church pews for years. Paul did not teach this kind of spiritual decadence, he certainly did not want Christians to be passive listeners, or "none-speaking babes," he desired them to develop ministries and grow spiritually. Eph 4v11-15. This shows the importance of having a fellowship meeting where Christians can develop their gifting and ministries. Paul taught that in these fellowships there was to be a real participation of all the local church members in body ministry. Today, many Christians fear body ministry, because of the demands that it will make upon them. Others feel that young Christians will make mistakes, and will not be as presentable to the world as a polished well-spoken minister. However, unless "everyone has" something from Jesus in our fellowships, they are not genuine New Testament church fellowships. Some modern Christians, who go regularly to church services, have never been to a New Testament fellowship meeting at all. In most churches a "minister" has replaced Christ-directed body ministry, and this has kept multitudes of Christians in spiritual infancy and immaturity.

The Greek word "kerusso," "to proclaim as a herald," obviously implies that there was a place for an uninterrupted discourse in preaching, teaching, and evangelism in the early Church. However, in both evangelistic and fellowship meetings, the more usual pattern was dialogue, discussion, reasoning, and question and answer in an informal conversational manner. There was far more participation and discussion in Paul's preaching hall, than there is in today's church services. "Dialogue," "dialegomai," is used in Acts 17v2,17, 18v4,19, 19v8,9, 20v7,9, 24v12,25. "Peitho," to persuade, occurs in Acts 28v23,24, in connection with Paul's evangelism. "Suzeteo," to reason, is used of Paul's and Stephen's irresistible Scripture reasoning with those who opposed them. The arguments of these great Christians was unanswerable, so their opponents murdered Stephen, and planned to murder Paul. Acts 6v9,10, 9v29,30. Modern Christianity has cramped and straightened even the Gospel mission to a formal service, which it certainly was not in the early Church.

2) Body ministry encourages and develops ministries in God's flock.

The Holy Spirit is the overall superintendent of the whole Church of Christ, His aim is to produce ministry in each local church. The object of the New Testament leaders, therefore, was to produce ministries in the flock by informal body ministry. Eph 4v8-14. In Eph 4v14, Paul speaks of immature believers without the ability to minister; the word he uses for "children," is "neepios," which means literally, "none-speaking ones," or "without the power of speech," its literal meaning was lost in general use, but immaturity was always associated with it. "Neepios" occurs in Matt 11v25, 21v16, Luke 10v21, Rom 2v20, 1Cor 3v1, 13v11, Gal 4v1,3, Eph 4v14, Heb 5v13. Paul says in Eph 4v14, that those who remain children, and do not grow and minister, are at the mercy of false teachers, who though seeming to play the game, are really using loaded dice and trickery. "By the sleigh," is "en tei kubia," which means literally, "in the throw of a dice." By craft and trickery is "panourgia," and methodical deceit is "methodia." Crafty false teachers can fool God's babies as easily as a conjurer or trickster can deceive a young child. Paul's statement has been proved true again and again by the way that false cults have deceived many Christians, because they have been kept in doctrinal and spiritual infancy by the churches which they have attended.

We read in Heb 5v13,14, that the Hebrew Christians had been converted long enough to have grown into able teachers of God's Word, but most of them were still immature non-speaking babies, when they should have grown to maturity. Christians who are mature ("teleios," Strong's NT:5046), full grown, perfect), have "by constant use" ("hexis," (Strong's NT:1838), habit), had their senses "exercised" ("gumnazo," to exercise vigorously) and are "able to discern" ("diakrisis," (Strong's NT:1253), judge thoroughly) between "good" ("kalos," (Strong's NT:2570), properly beautiful, but also that which is good, virtuous, valuable and precious.) and "evil" ("kakos," (Strong's NT:2556), worthless, depraved, injurious, pernicious, evil). Elders are to bring their flocks to maturity as soon as possible; this involves giving them moral example, doctrinal stability through correct teaching, and leading them into an experience of spiritual gifts. Elders are to make sure that the doctrine and experience of their charges is sound and healthy, "hugiaino." 1Tim 1v10, 6v3, 2Tim 1v13, 4v3, Titus 1v9,13, 2v1,2. The maturity of their flocks is the test of an elder's ministry.

Many Christians have been kept in spiritual infancy by their religious leaders for decades, and are "none speaking ones," they have been taught only to listen, and have not developed any ministries. This is very dangerous for the Christians concerned, and disastrous for the effectiveness of the Christian witness. **Ministers who keep their members in spiritual immaturity, and don't allow God's babies to grow, frustrate God's longing desire for the spiritual and doctrinal growth of His children. Those who thwart the spiritual growth of God's children in this way, certainly cannot expect a, "Well done," when they meet Jesus.** Indeed, such ministries that are in the Church during the last seven years of this age, but especially during the last three and a half years, the period known as the Great Tribulation, are the 'evil servants' referred to in Matt 24v45-51, and the

vast majority of their flock are the 'foolish virgins' referred to in Matt 25v1-13. God gives a ministry of some kind to every Christian, but if people are not given a chance to develop their ministries, they will wither and die, instead of grow and develop. Happy, indeed, is the Christian fellowship, or church, that allows the Holy Spirit to give and develop ministries, it can be a veritable heaven upon earth. Eph 4v7,12.

Christians are stultified by passivity and formality in one-man ministry meetings. However, in the freedom of informal meetings, with sympathetic friends we know, love and trust, there is far less stress and strain, and we feel much more at ease and are less likely to be nervous, and we know that our friends don't mind if we do stutter, stammer or hesitate. The informality, sympathy and friendliness, enable and encourage even the most timid to discuss God's Word and manifest spiritual gifts. Informal, body ministry meetings bring greater interest, absorption and increase in Scripture knowledge. Christians can learn far more by dialogue and discussion, than they can by passively listening to one speaker, and if they get something from God's Word for themselves and minister it to others, it will mean far more to them than if they are just a passive listener. In Luke 11v5-13, Jesus said that God will abundantly bless with the Holy Spirit, those who earnestly seek Him to obtain "bread for others." This determined seeking of God for something to meet the needs of people, brings greater dependence upon the Holy Spirit, this will certainly bring greater operations of the Holy Spirit. **In 1Cor 14v23-25, Paul says the revelation of the secrets of peoples hearts will make them acknowledge that God is in the midst. This shows that we can manifest the same gifts that Jesus manifested when the Samaritan woman had the secrets of her life revealed by Jesus.** This brought about her salvation and brought revival among the despised Samaritans, this can happen today, when we submit to the leadings and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

I have found that informal meetings have a really beneficial effect upon children. **When children associate Christianity with formal, dead services, they grow up not wanting it.** However, when they see the liberty, fellowship, love and joy in Christian meetings, and feel the presence of God, and see His acts and manifestations, they desire and enjoy Christian experience.

3) Informal body ministry meets deep spiritual needs in the Church.

There are important ministries of the Holy Spirit that rarely take place in many churches; such as the healing of memories and hurts, and a release from burdens and worries, by the gift of faith. This is not a kind of Christian psychology, which under the guise of spirituality is really an invasion into people's privacy. **It is a sin to resurrect and demand the details of people's past sins and lives, they are buried with Jesus.** Woe betide anyone who digs up what God has buried. Rom 6v1-4. The Christian who operates God's power and revelation gifts, often never needs to know what that need is; there is often simply the revelation of a burden and need, and the knowledge when God has met that need. The Holy Spirit is a perfect gentleman, He does not want to parade people's innermost secrets and problems before all. He will only show us specific needs, if He thinks that it is absolutely necessary, and many times this information will only be for the person praying to know, and it should not be spoken out to others. Many of the Holy Spirit's revelations are for secret prayer, not public utterance. It is also often very wise and necessary to seek God for the lifting of people's hurts and burdens without them even knowing it, or openly praying for them, just as our Lord did for people in need when He attended the synagogue services at Nazareth.

I have found, through over many years experience, that people come into formal meetings with burdens and time after time go out with the same burdens. Christians just don't get to know one another, or each other's needs in formal meetings. In an informal meeting, or in a time of prayer after a formal meeting, these burdens can be met by the power and revelation gifts of the Holy Spirit. **Formal meetings can have a definite place, but they need to be followed by informal fellowship and ministry, if we are to meet people's needs and experience the fullness of God's blessing.**

4) Informal body ministry produces a remarkable fellowship of "Agape" love.

Body ministry makes Christians depend on one another instead of themselves, and this is not only a real antidote to pride, it also produces real love between Christians. 1Cor 12v20-26, John 13v35. **We are to learn from, and help each other.** 1Thess 2v4-9. In genuine body ministry, there is an exercise of mind over doctrine, and controlled emotion in worship and praise. There is also an exercise of spirit in contact with God and in ministry to others, and a remarkable fellowship of love between Christians and their God. It is this contact with God and love for each other that gives life to our doctrine and worship. Jesus said that we must worship God in spirit and in truth, and this involves loving our brothers and sisters in Christ. John 4v24, 13v35. Those who have experienced this remarkable love and fellowship of spirit with other Christians, know what Christ meant when He said, "I pray that they may be one, as we are one." John 17v20-22. When Christ ministers through the local church as a body, there develops a remarkable fellowship of saints, which is as real as their fellowship with God. It is this deep ministry of the Holy Spirit and real fellowship in Christ, that creates and constitutes the liberty Paul speaks of in 2Cor 3v17,18. **Freedom and liberty in the spirit, does not consist in the repetition of twenty lively choruses again and again, this**

can be the worst form of bondage, if it is not led by the Holy Spirit. True liberty comes from a God anointed worship, and a love impregnated body ministry, which produces real fellowship and friendship in Christ.

In many modern churches there is no fellowship of the saints, Christians just don't get to know one another. In the early Church there was the atmosphere of love and friendship, which enabled Christians, not only to share their blessings, but their burdens too. They could talk of their deep problems, and even their sins, knowing that they would be lovingly and thoughtfully prayed with, until their spiritual and physical needs were met through the power and love of Christ. James 5v14-20. When Jesus is in control, a friendship, fellowship and tender burden bearing, can take place in an informal house fellowship, that can never take place in formal church meetings.

We can have fellowship without membership and membership without fellowship. Many Christians are looking to the wrong "ship" for blessing. In many churches fellowship takes place in loving conversations after the services, but often there is little or no fellowship during the services. This is certainly not a New Testament Christian fellowship, where all were of "one accord," "one soul" and "one mind." It says in Acts 4v32, "There was one heart and soul in the multitude of those who believed." This shows that there can be a real unity in a multitude of Christians, and Christians should gather together in these large groups for teaching and fellowship, but they should also break up into separate small meetings for closer fellowship and body ministry participation. Where numbers get large, there can, of necessity, only be a limited number of people taking part. This is why John Wesley divided a church into a number of class meetings, and limited the size of these class meetings. This deep and loving fellowship of saints with God and each other, will preserve us from backsliding in these evil last days. Heb 10v24,25.

The depth and beauty of true Christian fellowship can be seen in Phil 2v1, Paul speaks of "consolation in Christ," "parakleesis;" and "comfort of love," "paramuthion;" and "bowels of compassions," "tis splanchna," tender higher emotions; and "mercies," "oiktirmoi," pities. All these beautiful, heavenly emotions, spring from a "fellowship of the spirit," "koinonia," a partnership and sharing of the common fountain of their life in God. "Koinonia," means a common sharing, communion, joint participation and fellowship, occurs in Acts 2v42, Rom 15v26, 1Cor 1v9, 10v16, 2Cor 6v14, 8v4, 9v13, 13v14, Gal 2v9, Eph 3v9, Phil 1v5, 2v1, 3v10, Philemon v6, Heb 13v16, 1John 1v3,6,7.

In Phil 2v2, Paul speaks of Christians being "one in soul," "sunpsuchoi;" and "of one mind," "to hen phronountes," we are to have harmony of desires and feelings, and unity of thought. The book of Acts is full of this unity; when Christian's enemies are of one accord, Acts 7v57, 18v12, 19v29, Christians certainly need to be united and of "one accord." See Acts 1v14, 2v1,46, 4v24, 5v12, 15v25, Rom 15v6, in every case the word is "homothumadon." See Acts 8v6, 12v20.

The early church at Jerusalem experienced a glorious unity, fellowship and love, and a joint participation in the Holy Spirit's ministries. It is true that Satan tried to spoil this unity, and succeeded in many churches, but in Acts 2 and 4, we certainly see this lovely fellowship in Christ. The fruit and influence of the Holy Spirit is love, and where He is in control, there is entreaty, tender consolation, tender higher emotion and pity, and a real sharing, trusting and binding together in Christ.

5) Body ministry even took place in newly formed Churches.

Infant churches depended upon their founders for the majority of their teaching and spiritual guidance, however, they were also encouraged to exercise body ministry. 1Cor 12v4-31. Indeed, body ministry participation in teaching was a normal part of synagogue services, so the Jews would be used to this. The Jewish synagogues were more conformed to the New Testament pattern of body ministry, than most of today's churches. **Modern ministers would die of shock if their sermon was interrupted by a question, or their statement challenged, or someone else asked permission to comment or give a contribution, yet this was the normal procedure of the synagogue and early Church.** The Jewish converts in Paul's churches already had a good knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures, and already knew how to practice body ministry in relation to teaching, they just had to learn and practice body ministry in relation to spiritual gifts. The Jews in Paul's churches, knew the Old Testament Scriptures very well, but it was not just a question of learning the doctrines and teaching of the New Covenant, it was also essential for them to experience the powers of the age to come. It was not just a question of theology, but of spiritual dynamic as well. **The rapid spiritual development of the churches through body ministry enabled Paul to appoint elders within two or three years of churches being founded.**

Unlike Paul, many Christian leaders today, resent rather than encourage developing ministries in their churches, however, to keep God's children in an infantile state is a serious sin, for it frustrates God's purposes and ministrations. This is especially true in regard to God being able to let the last seven years of this age to begin to come to pass, because He finds it so difficult to find believers who will seek Him so that He may prepare them to become members of the Glorious Woman in Rev 12. When ministries are not allowed to function, or are suppressed, there are only two alternatives, frustration or separation. The early Church members developed rapidly in spiritual

strength in the informal meetings in believers homes, they got to know each other well, and shared each others burdens and joys.

6) Body ministry took place in the Lord's Supper.

We see in 1Cor 11v21 to 14v31, what actually happened at a New Testament communion service, which took place in the believers' houses, it consisted of spiritual ministry plus spiritual gifts. The Lord's Supper was part of the fellowship that took place in the body ministry of the local church.

a) The Lord's Supper nearly always took place in a home.

The insistence that the Lord's Supper should only take place in a church building under the control of a paid minister, is quite unscriptural. For well over 250 years, the Romans did not allow Christians to own church property, they met in homes, catacombs, the open air, or hired buildings. With so many believers in the churches, Christians had to celebrate the Lord's Supper in many homes, and this they did. Acts 2v46. When our Lord instituted the communion service, He did so in a private house, and with close friends. Church leaders usually object to the Lord's Supper taking place in homes, because they desire to uphold their power structure, and to have things firmly under their control. It was for this reason that the religious leaders of our Lord's time persecuted Jesus and His Church. Love is content to see others blessed and rejoices to see God's Word fulfilled. **How often has clerical tyranny disguised itself as zeal for God and righteous indignation.** We can celebrate communion and remember our Lord's death, whenever, or wheresoever it is desirable, in a church building, a home or in the open air. Only two or three believers are necessary, and any believer can administer and partake of the Lord's Supper.

b) The Lord's Supper had the divine order of informality and spirituality.

The Passover feast was a family occasion, a social event, as well as a spiritual event; there was the divine order of informality and spirituality. The Lord's Supper was also an informal occasion, part of a Christians social fellowship with other Christians, part of an ordinary simple meal, and after a family meal, it was naturally supernatural. **God intends Christians to ENJOY spiritual fellowship together, not to be formal, distant and restrained with each other.** Notice the sweet, conversational, natural, informal nature of the Lord's last supper. We see the conversation between Christ and John, Christ and Peter, Christ and Judas, Peter and John, and separate conversations between other disciples. Jesus gave informal teaching, prophetic insights from the Scriptures, and prophetic warnings of His death and betrayal, mixed with encouraging promises, sublime praying, and a telling practical lesson in humility, when He washed their feet.

It is a striking fact that the early Church linked the Lord's Supper and Christian fellowship with social fellowship. Their Christian fellowship was also a glorious free informal Holy Spirit anointed social fellowship, "And day by day continuing with one mind in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart." Acts 2v46, 1Cor 11v20,21,32-34. The idea that we should fast before taking the Lord's Supper has no Scriptural basis; Jesus instituted it, "as they were eating in the Passover night." Matt 26v26. The whole aim of the Lord's Supper in the early Church was not just listening, but also the development of ministry and spirituality through sharing fellowship and experience in a conversational manner. The joy of the Lord that makes us strong is developed in this environment. Neh 8v10.

In many churches Christians gather for the Lord's Supper, but there is little communion or fellowship of the saints. I am not saying that the formal communion services are wrong, or that Christians are not remembering their Lord's death, they certainly are. I am saying that if there is no informal, conversational sharing of experience and loving ministry to one another, we have not reached the New Testament ideal of a communion service. There can be no communion, where there is disagreement and division; deep love, trust and fellowship was the New Testament basis of fellowship. 1Cor 10v17, Matt 5v23,24. Paul warned the Galatians that if they did not walk in love to each other they would bite and devour one another. Gal 5v13-16. Fellowship is based on mutual love for each other. We are one body, united by one Spirit, having one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one Father. Eph 4v1-6, Rom 8v9.

We see from Acts 20v7-12, that hours of fellowship, instruction and talk could take place both before and after the Lord's supper. There was prolonged informal fellowship, discussion, teaching and worship, as there was at the actual Last Supper. It is a sign of spiritual inertia and weakness, when a great deal of time is given to singing, and there is hardly any teaching and discussion of the Scriptures. At the actual last supper we only read of one hymn being sung, this obviously is not the rule, for we read in Eph 5v18,19, of Christians thanking God and admonishing one another in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." We read in Col 3v16, that these songs are to be based on the Scriptures, like the marvellous hymns of the Wesley's, their content being full of glorious doctrinal and experimental Christian truth. Beautiful church music may be elevating, but without the blessing of God it can degenerate to the level of mere entertainment. Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs are indeed very blessed, when we are filled with

the Spirit, and make melody in our hearts to the Lord.

c) The Lord's Supper took place at any time, any number of times a week, anywhere, and by any believer.

The Lord's Supper was instituted, not on the first day of the week, but on a weeknight, as a supper. We read in Acts 20v7, that Christians gathered on that occasion on the first day of the week, however, this is not the only day, for the Lord's supper can be celebrated on any day. Though the Passover meal was a supper, it does not mean that the communion service should only take place in the evening, for Acts 2v46, indicates that it can take place at any time during the day, though evening was probably the best time for most believers. The head of the house administered the Passover feast, however, all Christians are kings and priests and can administer the Lord's Supper. **Men have replaced the simplicity, beauty, and freedom of the communion service with their own forms, and have taken much of the blessing away, however, if we follow the pattern laid down by Jesus, we shall always find blessing, and God.**

7) Christ inspired women to take part in Body Ministry.

The New Testament tells us that women were anointed by God to participate in the worship and ministry of the Church. Indeed, the Scriptures reveal that women sometimes led in God's work. **Miriam, a notable prophetess, led the women in praise and prophecy; she is given the credit with Moses and Aaron for delivering Israel from Egypt.** Exodus 15v20,21, Micah 6v4. Deborah was not only a prophetess, she was also the leading judge of Israel; notice that she was not made the leader of Israel by men, God appointed her, and led her to victory over overwhelming foes. **Through her spiritual power, Israel had victory for 40 years.** Judges 4v1-5v31. The prophetess Huldah was the spiritual giant and spiritual leader of her day, when anyone wanted to have a word from God they went to Huldah. Jeremiah was alive at this time, but when good king Josiah needed a word from God, he sent the high priest to Huldah for God's guidance; she had a superior prophetic ministry, and could get the word of the Lord far quicker than Jeremiah. (See Jer 42v7, it took ten days for Jeremiah to get the word of the Lord.) Huldah's prophecy brought about Josiah's revival. 2Kings 22v13-23v25. Anna the prophetess was the person closest to God in Israel at the time of Christ's birth, Israel's male religious leaders were spiritually dead, and were spiritual babes compared to this godly prophetess. God used Anna to minister His love and life, and to meet the needs that they missed. God can, and often does, do the very same today. Luke 2v36-38. History reveals a vast army of godly women, like David's mother, "the handmaid of the Lord;" and Hannah, the mother of Samuel; Jochebed, the mother of Moses, and many others, who have been the channels of God's love and power to their children and their generation. They changed history by their prayers and spiritual ministries. **When men have grown spiritually cold and formal, it has often been left to godly praying women to rekindle the fires of revival. Men nearly always monopolise the pulpits and positions of authority, women usually take the lead in love, spirituality, prayerfulness and faith.**

The Devil and misguided men have tried to squash the ministry of women by misquoting certain texts.

An examination of these verses shows that both are concerned with domestic matters.

The first Scripture is 1Cor 14v34,35: "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; --- it is a shame for women to speak in the church." In 1Cor 14v34,35, we see that the wife had to ask their husbands at home, this was certainly not over teaching, for in the informal house meetings of the early Church there was always liberty to do this. Paul had just stated in 1Cor 11v4, 5, that women could pray and prophecy in the church, and you cannot do this and be silent, and an examination of 1Cor 11v16-20, proves that Paul had been considering church practice, not private prayer. 1Cor 14v4,5,22-24,29-33, Acts 2v16-18. Paul said they must not discuss domestic matters at church fellowship meetings. Paul had said in Gal 3v28, that in Christ there is neither male or female.

The word "speak," "laleo," in 1Cor 14v34, has been translated "chatter" by some scholars, because "laleo," literally means, to chatter like a bird, to talk much, to prattle. It is true that in the New Testament the word is more used in the sense, "to talk," "to speak," but who is to say that Paul was not using it in its basic meaning, which would make very good sense in the light of the Christian fellowship gatherings in the Middle East in Paul's time. The synagogues did not possess our modern order, propriety, formality and "reverence." While the synagogues did not have the drunken, uproarious and disgraceful revelry that accompanied heathen religions; they enjoyed a real freedom and informality. The word "silence" was spoken to the restless, emotional and talkative Orientals, Greeks and Latins in Corinth, who were not used to any discipline, routine and order, not even in the informality of the synagogue meeting. **In the synagogues there was a very definite informality; extempore prayers were permitted, and those who desired to read the Scriptures and make comments upon them, could do so. Anyone who was thought to express wrong teaching in prayer or preaching was immediately stopped.** Acts 13v45-47, 18v6,7. Dialogue freely took place in the synagogue meeting. Acts 17v2,17, 18v4,9, 24v12,23. "dialegomai," Matt

2v34, Jude v9.

In "A New Testament Commentary," Howley, Bruce and Ellison, state with commendable honesty, that the verb "lalein," translated as "speak" in 1Cor 14v34, is used to generally to refer to any specific kind of speaking. They say that the suggestion cannot be ruled out, that Paul is merely speaking of irregular talking, in the form of soothing or rebuking babies, shouting out a remark or query, or just plain chattering. **There can be no doubt that Paul is referring to unedifying abuses of their freedom to speak, pray and prophecy in church gatherings, which Paul says is their right in 1Cor 11v5,6.** Since two or three Christians could make up a New Testament fellowship, Matt 18v20, when two or three Christian women meet and pray together, they make up a church meeting, must they be silent? of course not! The New Testament meetings were nearly always informal meetings in a home, and it was certainly not disgraceful for women to talk in this social fellowship, which accompanied Christian fellowship. **Satan is delighted over the restrictions that men have placed on the ministries of the Holy Spirit through God's handmaids; he knows that the Church has lost a great deal through these restrictions.**

The ordinance in 1Cor 14v34, is said to be based on the law, "but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law," however, no Scripture states that a woman could not pray, prophecy or preach. In Gen 3v16, God warns women that men would ruthlessly dominate them; however, this was a warning of bad home relationships, not church practice. In Gen 3v16, God did not curse women, it is a bad translation. In Eph 5v21-33, Paul instructs husbands to love their wives as Christ loves His Church, there is to be no bossing or hardness, there is to be the fellowship of love. In 1Pet 3v7, Peter warns that God will cut off and not listen to the prayers of a bad or inconsiderate husband. Ill-treatment of wives or women will have to be answered for on judgement day.

The second Scripture is, 1Tim 2v11: "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man," should be viewed strictly in the context of which they are spoken. In 1Tim 2v11,12, Paul is also referring to domestic matters, as the context clearly shows, for in v13,14, Paul speaks of Eve's relation to Adam and to child-bearing. Paul said that women should not usurp a man's place, and this is certainly true in the home; however, if God gives a woman a ministry, she is not usurping a man's place, she is taking her Christ-appointed place, she is only usurping a man's place if God has given her no ministry. **The trouble with the Church today, is not that women are usurping men's authority in the Church, but rather because men are usurping God's authority over the Church, by their traditions and practices.** It is true that Miriam tried to usurp Moses place and authority and suffered a very necessary chastisement from God for it. Num 12v1-16. However, there are far more cases in Scripture of men resisting and usurping God-appointed ministries, than there ever are of women. **It is a fact that women have manifested apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, and pastor-teaching ministries.** Women are ideally suited to a prophetic ministry, for God has given women a love and gentleness of spirit to care for their children and husbands, which is really the basic essential for a prophetic ministry. As Paul said, love towards others is the best and most powerful channel of spiritual gifts, and so women, who have developed love, by loving and caring, are often able to manifest the higher gifts of revelation, power and comfort, with great blessing. The women that do this are certainly not usurping men's authority; they are fulfilling the ministry that God has given to them.

Women certainly did not keep silent in the early Church, God told them to speak and minister.

Women were included in the great commission, they can proclaim the Gospel, and be used in healing the sick. Women first announced that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Matt 28v5-10,18,20, Mark 16v16,17. They also spoke out in tongues in the upper room, on the day of Pentecost. Acts 1v8,12-14. Women are looked upon in the same way as men regarding worship and ministry by the apostle Paul. Gal 3v28. We read in the New Testament of women who were recommended for their spirituality and ministry. There were the women without whose help Christ's ministry could not have continued in the way that it did. Luke 8v1-4. There was godly Priscilla, helper of Apollos, she had a church in her home. Acts 18v24-26, Rom 16v3-5,19, 2Tim 4v19. We see Paul's women fellow labourers, Junia, Rom 16v6,7; Phebe, Rom 16v1,2; and other women. Phil 4v3. Luke was impressed by the prophetic gifts of Philip's four daughters. Acts 21v8,9. Dorcas had a spiritual as well as a practical ministry; she was loved by all for her practical godliness. Acts 9v32-42. We read of the "elect woman" of 2Jn v1, another notable spiritual woman. Besides these there were a multitude of women who prayed, prophesied and preached, as the Hebrew of Psalm 68v11 states, "The Lord gave the word, and great was the multitude of women who published it." Blessed are those who publish the good tidings of Christ's Gospel. Isaiah 52v7. I feel that it is dishonest and hypocritical to give a woman a place in the ministry in difficult mission fields, and refuse them the same place in much easier conditions at home.

Women can make their homes a ministry, and men should co-operate with them in this. Paul said that older women should teach younger women sound doctrine and wise practice in the home. Titus 2v1-5, 1Thess 4v11. It is often better for Christian women to minister to women's needs for prayer, where this is possible, to save from criticism. **It is certainly very unwise and dangerous for men to pray with women on their own, if a man does have to**

pray with a woman, others should be present if it is at all possible. If we practice this it will save from appearance of evil, and will in particular save young people from emotional involvement, which can injure their feelings and spiritual growth, and cause even greater problems. Women, who have children, already have a congregation in their home, and they can minister love, faith and teaching to their children, which will never leave them. I owe an incalculable debt to my own dear departed mother for her constant love, concern, and support, and the inspiration of her prophetic ministry. God has often changed history through the ministries of godly mothers; think of godly Hannah, the prophetess, the mother of Samuel; Elizabeth the prophetess, the mother of John the Baptist; godly Mary the prophetess, the mother of our Lord. 1Sam 2v1-11, Luke 2v1-16. We thank God for women, like Hannah, who have made their grief, problems and frustrations, an incentive to seek God, and as a result have blessed whole communities and nations. Mary of Bethany was the one above all others, even more than John, to minister to Jesus in His hour of need. Mary's faith, genuine affection, concerned love, and fellowship of spirit, strengthened and sustained Jesus, and her name is recorded in the Gospel for all time because of it. Luke 10v38-42, John 12v3-8, Matt 26v6-13, John 11v1,2,5,6. Godly praying women are the spiritual backbone of most churches.

There are millions of Christian women today who are winning souls, blessing saints, preaching, prophesying, teaching, comforting the needy, and labouring on very difficult mission fields, with a ministry from Christ, out of a pure love for Him and mankind. May God richly bless every one of His handmaids! God puts His Spirit upon those He commissions, and Spirit-filled women have the right to minister as God directs. Num 11v29. **God has poured His Spirit, not only upon His menservants, but upon His handmaids as well, and given them a very definite ministry and place in His Church, therefore, those who resist women's ministry, resist God.** Acts 2v15-20. **Sister, obey God, not men's traditions. You must pray, prophesy, and preach as God leads and enables you, and do not allow anyone to make you bury your God-given talents, in the soil of silence.**

8) Body ministry took place in Church decisions and Church discipline.

We have already seen under pastor-elders, how the local churches put forward those Christians who had a definite ministry from Christ, to be their pastors. We see from Acts 6v2,3, that all the Christians in Jerusalem gathered to discuss the problem of looking after poor widows, "then the apostles called the multitude of the disciples unto them and said, 'Look ye out, seven men'....and the saying pleased the multitude." There was leadership, but not exclusive leadership or exclusive authority, not even by the twelve apostles; all the believers were consulted, and they put forward the men they knew would do the job the best. It was a family matter decided by all. There seems to have been no disagreement at all in the choice of the seven deacons. This is Divine wisdom; there is nothing more divisive than clergy or councils making decisions regardless of the feelings of "the multitude of the disciples." The regular meeting in the Scandinavian Pentecostal churches, at which policy is discussed and problems ironed out, where all can take part, is an essential part of New Testament Christianity. This means that problems in the churches are not allowed to carry on without being dealt with, so undercurrents of criticism or frustration of ideas do not occur. Important decisions should not be imposed on the local churches by the leadership of the churches with a "take it or leave it" attitude, they should be tested to see if they "please the multitude" of the disciples. Acts 6v5, 15v28.

In the church at Antioch, prophets and teachers gathered for fellowship and prayer together. Acts 13v1-4. However, they were not deciding church policies, they were "ministering to the Lord," and waiting upon Him, for His blessing, guidance, and a deepening of their ministries. It was God who sent Barnabus and Paul on their apostolic mission, the church at Antioch recognised this call and stood behind them in it.

The "Council" Of Jerusalem.

Many church leaders believe that councils of ministers should make decisions for their churches, and they quote "The Council of Jerusalem" to prove their point. However, **if we examine Acts 15 closely, we will find that it gives no authority for councils, or synods composed of ministers, or representatives, autocratically deciding the policies and running of the churches.**

Dean Farrar writes on page 243 of his, "The Life and Letters of St. Paul:" "It is only by an unwarrantable extension of terms that the meeting of the Church of Jerusalem can be called a 'Council,'....It was not a convention of ordained delegates, but a meeting of the entire Church of Jerusalem to receive a deputation from the Church of Antioch." End of quote.

1) Notice who gathered at Jerusalem and why.

God had opened "a door of faith" to the Gentiles, but Satan tried to destroy the basic and essential truth of justification by faith, through those who had joined Christ's Church. Satan had tried to destroy the Church by persecution, but his attack by intrigue from within was far more deadly and dangerous, and but for the apostle Paul would undoubtedly have succeeded. Certain "false brethren" from Judea tried to close "the door of faith," and bring

the lovely converts at Antioch into the bondage of their own belief, they demanded obedience to the Law of Moses, instead of proclaiming the glorious liberty and freedom of the New Covenant. These Judaizers refused to accept the obvious implication of God's dealing with Cornelius and his friends. Satan through them tried to destroy the Church with the God-given tradition of the Old Covenant. **The Judaizers blindly refused to see that Christ had fulfilled the Law with its types and prophecies, so the type was no longer necessary; they had Christ the living fulfilment of the type, not the shadow.** Heb 8v1-13, 9v15,23,24, 10v8,9.

The Judaizers inferred that the Gentile Christians were not only inferior to unregenerate Jews, they systematically taught that Gentile converts had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses, or they could not be saved. Acts 15v1,5. "Except," is "ean me." In Acts 15v1, the word "taught," is "edidaskon," the imperfect active of "didasko," to teach, to teach or speak in a public assembly, the imperfect shows that they began to teach and kept it up. The Judaizers made a systematic attempt to bring the converts at Antioch into legalism, they practised a determined espionage and proud indoctrination of these lovely young converts. Antioch had proved its love and friendship with the church at Jerusalem with a very generous gift. Acts 11v30.

These Gentiles' hearts burned with love for Christ and their Jewish brethren in Christ, Paul was determined that this was not going to be extinguished by legal bondage. Paul and Barnabus challenged these Judaizers, "they had no small dissension and disputation with them," Acts 15v2, the word for "dissension" is "staseos," which means "insurrection" or "violent disruption;" the word for "disputation," is "zeteseos," which means dispute or discussion. It was a prolonged row, and these Judaizers refused to accept the revelation of the Church age as preached by Paul, Satan made a determined attempt to destroy the New Covenant truth through these Judaizers. Gal 5v1-4. Even the combined mighty ministries and Scriptural knowledge of Paul and Barnabus failed to convince these self-appointed guides of Christ's Church of the error of their ways. The church at Antioch appointed Paul and Barnabus and some others to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders to settle this matter.

On their journey to Jerusalem Paul and Barnabus reported to the churches of Phoenicia and Samaria how the Gentiles had turned to God, and their news was received with great joy and praise. At Jerusalem Paul and Barnabus again "declared all things that God had done with them." Acts 15v3,4. After the welcome of the Jerusalem Church and the elders and apostles, battle is joined, the Christian Pharisees insist that these Gentile converts "must," "dei," be circumcised and charged to keep the Law of Moses. They evidently were still as narrow in their outlook as when they challenged Peter over his preaching to the Gentiles in the home of Cornelius. Acts 15v5 with 11v2-18.

We read in Acts 15v24, that the Judaizers from the Jerusalem Church had greatly troubled and subverted the church at Antioch. "Troubled," is "etaraxan," the aorist of "tarasso," to agitate, to disturb, to throw into confusion, to make the heart palpitate. John 14v1,27. "Subverting," is "anaskeuazontes," the present participle of "anaskeuazo," to plunder, ravage, pervert, and destroy," it has the thought of the reversal of good that had been done, or the tearing down of what had been built, and is used to describe the plundering of a town. The idea of deciding the matter with the church at Jerusalem, came from the church at Antioch, not from the church at Jerusalem, and so all the Jerusalem church, and representatives of the Antioch church, gathered to discuss the problem. The Judaizers had greatly damaged the church at Antioch, and were severely censured for it. It seems the Judaizers either withdrew, or submitted to the decision for a while, whatever they did at this point, they later certainly started up their divisive and satanically inspired activities again.

This conference at Jerusalem was not a conference of ministers from many churches, but appointed representatives of the church at Antioch, meeting the whole church of Jerusalem. This is the only meeting of this kind in recorded in the New Testament, even though, by modern standards, many more would have been thought necessary, and held on a regular basis. It was a meeting to decide the answer to a fundamental doctrinal point. The decision had consequences for the Church universal, for it decided whether the Church and Gentile believers were to keep the Jewish Law, or be separate from Judaism.

When Christian leaders insist that they have the right to lead and decide matters on their own, they are departing from New Testament principles, and in particular Acts 15v22,25, where we see that "the whole church" was involved and of "one accord" in this critical decision. The Holy Spirit confirmed their decision, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us." Acts 15v28.

NB It is obvious that the first gathering at Jerusalem in Acts 15v4 was adjourned, for 15v6, speaks of another gathering. It is between these two gatherings that the private conferences of Gal 2v1-10 undoubtedly took place. Dean Farrar writes: "I have here assumed without hesitation that the visit to Jerusalem of Gal 2v1-10, though here mentioned as though it were a second visit, was identical with that of Acts 15, and therefore was in reality his third visit." End of quote.

Farrar then details the five visits of Paul to Jerusalem, which I have detailed as follows in my own words.

1. Paul's visit after his conversion on the Damascus Road. Acts 9v26.

2. When Paul brought the contribution for the poor at Jerusalem. Acts 11v30.
3. Paul's visit to resolve the problem of the Judaizers at the Council of Jerusalem. Acts 15v2.
4. Paul's visit after his second missionary journey. Acts 18v22.
5. Paul's visit to fulfil a vow at Jerusalem, and before his imprisonment at Caesarea. Acts 21v17.

Farrar continues: "Now this visit of Gal 2 could not possibly have been the first; nor as it is proved by Gal 2v7, as well as by the whole chronology of his life, could it have been the second; nor, as we see from the presence of Barnabus (compare Gal 2v1 with Acts 15v39) could it have been the fourth; for no one can assume that it was without accusing Paul of disingenuous suppression when he spoke to the Galatians of this sole intercourse which he had with the apostles; and that it was not the fifth is quite decisively proved by Gal 2v11.

By the exhaustive method, therefore, we see that the visit dwelt on in Gal 2 must have been the third. It would, indeed, be inconceivable that it was some visit not recorded by the author of the Acts if there were any reason whatever for such a supposition; but when we consider how impossible it was that such a visit should have occurred without the knowledge of St. Luke, and how eminently the facts of it accorded with the views which he wished to further, and how difficult it is to find any other occasion on which such a visit would have been natural, we have no reason for adopting such an hypothesis. Nor, indeed, can anything be much clearer than the identity of circumstances in the visits thus described. In the two narratives the same people go up at the same time, from the same place, for the same object, in consequence of the same interference by the same agitators, and with the same results. Against the absolute certainty of the conclusion that the visits were one and the same there is nothing whatever to set but trivial differences of detail, everyone of which is accounted for in the text." End of quote.

Luke would hardly have passed over the events of Gal 2v1-10, if they had taken place in Acts 11v29,30; it is also difficult to fit 14 years between Acts 9v27 and Acts 11v29,30; also Gal 2v1-10 cannot be Acts 11v29,30, for Paul saw the elders, not the apostles, and in Gal 2v1-10, Paul proved that he was not behind the greatest apostles in experience and knowledge. So, we come to the conclusion that in Acts 15v5-29, we have the public narrative of events, and in Gal 2v1-10, we see the private discussions of Paul with the other apostles. Paul and Barnabus saved the Church from staying within the Old Covenant.

We see, then, leading men among the brethren meeting for discussion, but not for decision without the approval of the rest of the church at Jerusalem. In Acts 15v4,6,12,22, the whole church at Jerusalem gathered to consider the problem of the relation of Gentile Christians to the law and circumcision; not only apostles and elders, but "all the multitude," and "the whole multitude of disciples," and "the whole church," were involved in the discussion and the decision.

2) Notice the freedom of participation in discussion and the unanimous decision.

The apostles did not assume authority over the meeting of the two churches, they let discussion freely take place, they did not direct by apostolic authority, or by prophetic revelation. Nor did the elders, who were the pastors of the two flocks, insist that they were the only ones to hear and decide the matter. The apostles and elders did not decide the issue on their own, all the Jerusalem church was there, and all God's local family was at the discussion. Considerable time was given for people to air their points of view, grievances and objections. The Judaizers were given opportunity to fully state their views and there was "much questioning and disputing," "polles zeteseos," but there was no attempt to silence them, or to rush things to a decision by a majority vote, or to limit discussion and debate. There was a prolonged controversy and discussion over what to believe, it was a question of faith, and all could take part, not just a select few. This questioning, debate and discussion, was a blessing, it made everyone think through the implications of the New Covenant.

After there had been much debate, Peter stands up and repeats how God directed him to preach the Gospel to Cornelius and his friends (about twelve years before), all of whom were Gentiles. God saved these Gentiles and filled them with the Holy Spirit just as He did the Christian Jews. Peter then asks the telling question, "Why tempt ye God?" that is, how could they accuse God of making a mistake, or refuse to follow His guidance as the Israelites had done at Massah and Meribah. Exodus 17v7, Deut 6v16, 1Cor 10v9. Peter then says that the Christian Gentiles should not be compelled to carry a yoke, which they as Jews had never been able to bear. Matt 11v30, 23v4. Peter finishes by saying that salvation is by faith in Christ not in ceremony or ritual, and it is fitting that the last words of Peter in Acts are for forgiveness and liberty in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul and Barnabus follow up Peter's account and conclusions from God's dealings with Cornelius, with their own account of God's dealings and mighty workings with the Gentiles. Peter's words had silenced everybody, Acts 15v12, and prepared the way for the appeal to Christian experience, these facts were far more eloquent than any intellectual argument. James then gives the Scriptural proof to back up God's directive to Peter to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, by quoting Amos 9v11,12, from the Septuagint, and finishes by recommending four simple prohibitions for the Gentiles, which would stop them stumbling the Jews. These were abstaining from eating food

offered to idols; from things strangled, Gen 9v4, Lev 3v17, 7v26, Deut 12v16, 1Sam 14v33, Acts 10v15, Rom 14v14; from blood, dishes made from blood were common among Greeks and Romans; and from fornication, which was treated very lightly, indeed, as natural and permissible, by the heathen. Acts 15v21. Notice the insistence of appeal to God's workings and God's Word, not only to God's Word, or just God's workings, but also to both. Peter, Paul and Barnabas, tell of God's workings, Peter gives a very strong Scriptural warning as well, and James concludes with Scriptural proof and the practical application of that truth.

3) Notice the unanimous decision.

There was prolonged discussion, then decision; nothing was done until unanimity was reached, "having come to one accord," v25, "then it pleased the apostles and elders, **WITH THE WHOLE CHURCH,**" v22, "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us." v28. **The decision was confirmed to be of God by the unanimous decision of the whole church, and the Holy Spirit.**

We cannot expect to get God's will in a church with a prayerless and worldly "rule by majority vote," this is a carnal expedient. We know that elders were elected by the popular vote of Christians, but this was a statement of confidence in proven ministries, and this was done prayerfully, and is quite different from worldly majority voting. Both Christian and worldly experience has often proved the majority to be wrong and the minority right. The report of the twelve spies proves that the carnal and unbelieving often outnumber the spiritual and full of faith. Num 13v1 to 14v45. Rule by majority vote often brings dissension, disagreement, confusion and distrust, and hinders fellowship, which is certainly against the divine desire that God's children should be one. Rule by majority vote has led to families and friends being either estranged, or indoctrinated to vote certain ways, and has resulted in fights for power behind the scenes, which can only be described as worldly and wicked. **It is a tragedy when churches are divided into voting power groups, these power struggles destroy fellowship, and frustrate the desires of the Holy Spirit, and instead of the unanimity that brings certain victory, there is a division that brings sure defeat.**

We must seek "the mind of the Lord," and recognise Jesus as the Head and Guide of His body the Church. Rom 12v4,5, 1Cor 12v12-27, Eph 4v11-16. **A body goes into convulsions when it is sick and is not directed by the head, this is a true picture of Christ's Church, when we do what we want, and not what He wants. We must be willing to pray until we all come to the same mind, this proves our subjection to Jesus.** John 17v20-22, Rom 15v5-7, 1Cor 1v10-13, 2Cor 13v11-14, Eph 4v1-6,14-32, Phil 1v27, 2v1-5, 4v2, 1Thess 5v12-15. Jesus desires us to be one as He was with the Father, this oneness springs from mutual love, and this alone gives an effectual testimony to the world. A public practical unity of the spirit is essential, and the God who brought the Christians of the early Church, with their different ways, thoughts and backgrounds, to one accord, will do the same for us if we will humble ourselves and seek His face.

To obtain the mind of the Lord, prolonged united prayer has to be exercised by a church; there is no short cut. Prophecy may well confirm guidance from God, but it can never do away with the necessity of a person or church earnestly seeking God for His will. All local church members must have God's peace in their hearts before important decisions are made, if there is no unanimous decision, the matter should be left week by week, month by month, again and again, until all are of one accord. The China Inland Mission of Hudson Taylor practised this method, the secretary said, "When there has been a delay, it has always proved to have been a wise step, and the necessary guidance has come later on....no inconveniences have been found to arise from the plan." In an age of rush, quick decisions and worldly government and management techniques, churches have to be careful not to partake of the spirit of the world, or they can miss the good and perfect will of God. **The Trinity works by unanimity of plan, and churches should too, we should seek and follow the perfect plans that God has for His churches.** If the early Church had been as prayerless as many modern churches, Satan's attack by cherished tradition would certainly have succeeded. **Without diligent waiting upon God in prayer and worship, defeat is inevitable.**

Some have objected to the practice of unanimity on the grounds of 2Cor 2v6. "hoi pleiones," "the many," or "the majority," of 2Cor 2v6, means all the church except the sinning brother. A church should restrain action until there is unanimity of opinion, this demands the fruit of the Spirit, longsuffering and self-control, but it is the divine highway to divine guidance.

4) Notice the appealing and reasonable spirit of the decrees to the churches.

The apostles and elders at Jerusalem gave their decisions to the Gentile churches in a gentle manner, they did not pontificate, or act as lords. Matt 20v25-28, 1Pet 5v3. The decrees are given in an appealing advisory spirit, for Acts 15v28,29, reads, "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well." "Ye shall do well," is certainly not hard

legalism, it is the language of love and reasonableness.

We read in Acts 16v4, that the decisions of the apostles and elders and members of the church at Jerusalem are called, "the decrees," "ta dogmata," meaning decisions, or decrees, from "dokeo," to give an opinion. "Dogma" is used in Col 2v14 and Eph 2v15, of the legal requirements of the ordinances of the Law, and in Luke 2v1 and Acts 17v7, of the decrees of the Caesars. The decrees of Acts 16v4, are said to be, "ordained of the apostles and elders;" "ordained," is "kekrimena," the perfect passive participle of "krino," to judge, to decide, the perfect emphasises the permanence and abiding nature of the decrees. In Eph 2v20 and 3v5, Paul confirms that the foundation of doctrine was laid down by apostles. The important thing about the Jerusalem decree was that the heads of the church at Jerusalem, and the apostles, admitted that circumcision was not essential to salvation, and a Gentile was not to be compelled to be circumcised or keep the Law. This brought temporary peace to the Gentiles, but it did not finally settle the problem, as we see from our next point.

5) Notice the danger of being restricted by a former God-blessed tradition.

There was a great conflict in the early Church over the relation of the Law to Christianity; even genuine Christians were very slow to realise that Christ had fulfilled the types and prophecies of the Old Covenant, and He had instituted a completely New Covenant. The early Jewish Christians still followed and cherished their old forms and traditions, we are no different from them, and we too are often slow to follow the Lord Jesus to the blessings of the New Covenant. In our day we often still see former God-blessed cherished traditions being an hindrance to Christians experiencing the fullness of New Testament Christian experience. The numbers of zealous Jews who became Christians was so great, that it appears that Peter, James and Barnabus were overcome by them, it seems from Gal 2v12 that they had compromised New Testament truth through fear of offending them. This proves how we all need to watch our hearts, if men of God of this calibre can be inconsistent and compromise truth when pressured to do so by Jews who were loathe to put on one side their former Jewish traditions. We can all fail God if we do not keep close to Jesus. It is only as we seek the mind and will of God in earnest prayer, that we shall be clear-sighted enough to discern God's will, and strong and courageous enough to perform it.

We read in Gal 2v11-21, that Paul reproved Peter and Barnabus, for living like Christians one day and like Jews another day. It was very wrong for them to treat Gentile Christians as brothers one day, and then to shun them as Gentiles another day, because of the fear the Jews and the Judaizers in the Church, so Paul publicly rebukes Peter and Barnabus for this. Paul's words were obviously received by Peter, for we find no trace of bitterness in Peter towards Paul, he recognised his great ministry, and his divinely inspired New Testament truth. 2Pet 3v15. Peter and Paul honoured and respected each other, and Paul's correction did not spoil their affection for each other, they parted in friendship, a lesson we need to note. Barnabus did not separate from Paul on the grounds of this correction; it was on the issue of Paul's rejection of Mark, a relative of Barnabus. Paul later as good as admitted that he had been wrong over Mark, when he asked for his help, and Peter spoke well of Mark also. Col 4v10, Philemon v24, 2Tim 4v11, 1Pet 5v13. This teaches us that even the judgement and actions of apostles and notable Christian men, can be suspect at times, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1Cor 1v26-31.

When Paul came to Jerusalem after his second apostolic mission, the issue of the relation of Christianity to the Law came to a head again. The church praised God for what He had done through Paul, but they were obviously suspicious of Paul's doctrine. They asked Paul to take part in a Nazarite vow, to show that he did not teach "apostasy from Moses," as the Judaizers had said that he did. **Paul did not teach "apostasy from Moses," this was a devilish parody of his teaching, he taught the fulfilment of Mosaic type and prophecy in Christ.**

Paul had made a vow in Acts 18v18, and undertook a Nazarite vow in Acts 21v23-27. This involved the sacrifice of burnt offerings, sin offerings and peace offerings, as well as a basket of unleavened cakes and a libation of wine. Num 6v1-21. While it is true that God had ordained the ceremonies of the Law, and the Jews had practised them in God's will for fifteen centuries, and the apostles had used the Temple for a period, Luke 24v53, Acts 3v1, there can be no doubt that the Old Covenant had passed away when Christ came and died. John 1v17, Matt 11v11-14, Heb 8v7-13, 10v1-9. It is almost unbelievable to see Paul, the chief exponent of justification by faith, not only standing in the Temple and submitting himself to the Law, but also to the petty ceremonial additions of the Rabbis. Paul must have realised that he was giving the Judaizers, who had seized on his circumcision of Timothy as a proof of his inconsistency, Acts 16v3, some real ammunition to use against him. Why did Paul do it? Some have tried to justify Paul's visit to Jerusalem and his involvement with Temple worship on the following grounds, which I personally am not happy with.

1) Those who try to justify Paul's observation of Temple rites, say that Paul did not give way on the issue of justification by faith, the brethren at Jerusalem admitted that this was not the issue. Acts 21v25. They say Paul was acting on the principle he laid down in 1Cor 9v19-23, it was an act of love, to the Jews, he became a Jew to win them to Christ. **However, this expediency involved a considerable compromise with truth.** Paul had called the Judaizers, who said that keeping the Law was essential to salvation, "false brethren," "dogs," "false apostles,"

"deceitful workers," and servants of Satan. 2Cor 11v13-15, Gal 2v4, Phil 3v2. In both Galatians and Corinthians, Paul had said that no one could be justified by the Law, and said that all who taught they could were accursed. Gal 1v6-10, 2v16, 3v10-14. Paul had called the ceremonies of the Law "weak and beggarly elements," as a means of justification, and said that circumcision was an unnecessary mutilation. Gal 4v9-11, 5v12.

2) Those who try to justify Paul's observation of Temple rites, say that when Paul withheld truth from those who could not bear it, he was following the example of Jesus who withheld truth from those who could not bear it. John 16v12. Jesus did veil the truth of the implications of the New Covenant from His apostles, even after His cross and resurrection, because of their inability to bear that revelation, because they were so bound by the traditions of the Old Covenant. Jesus had to leave that to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is evident from the apostles question, "Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" that even after the forty days ministry of the risen Christ, the apostles did not understand the truth about the Church. Paul might have tried to justify his observation of Temple rites by thinking that if Jesus had been limited in what He could say to His apostles, then he had the right to act in the same way, and that if the matter had been thrashed out immediately, it would have produced great disorder in the Church, and great opposition from the Jews.

However, nothing can justify Paul's visit to Jerusalem, for the Lord had told Paul not to go there. The problem of the relation of the Church to Judaism was going to be solved a mere ten years ahead, when the destruction of Jerusalem ended the Jewish state and religion. Those who defend Paul's action, say that he looked upon his vow as an act of public consecration to God and as an appeal to the Jews, not as a means of justification, however, it was an act of expediency, and was a carnal attempt to remove barriers and win people over, but instead of doing this it produced a riot and more persecution, just as the Lord had warned Him.

NB: Paul disobeyed God when he went to Jerusalem.

The above reasons are not satisfactory, for in Acts 21v4, God told Paul **NOT** to go to Jerusalem, and his disobedience brought about tragic results. Acts 20v22,23, 21v4,11-14. Why did Paul disobey the Lord and go to Jerusalem? Paul's love for his people drove him to Jerusalem; he was willing to be accursed from Christ, if it could only have saved them. Rom 9v1-5. **It is very sad that the apostles and elders of the church at Jerusalem were the means of bringing the prophetic warnings to pass.** They should have defended Paul's teaching of the New Covenant, but their appeal was based on an unscriptural expediency, and it nearly cost Paul his life. It all shows how difficult it is to break free of our traditions, and how the fear of man can hinder and harm the church of God. **If we are not careful we can be as presumptuous and disobedient as the Israelites, who disobeyed God's command to Moses that nothing was to be added or taken away from the pattern that He had given, Heb 8v5, they ignored this command and added thousands of their own traditions and rules and so made the Word of God of none effect. In the end they persuaded themselves that their tradition was God's truth and rejected Christ in favour of their own tradition and murdered their Messiah.**

Excommunication and Discipline.

Jesus personally instituted the procedure for discipline in the Church. Matt 18v15-22. **Not every private wrong has to be brought before the local church as the Lord makes clear in Matt 18v15-17, the person wronged should first aim at a private reconciliation, then, if there is no repentance and reconciliation, before witnesses, and finally before the whole church; then if they do not repent, they are not to be treated as a Christian brother until repentance is forthcoming.** Matt 5v23,24, Luke 17v3,4. Jesus insisted that the whole local church performed the discipline of a member of a local church. Charges must be established in the presence of all, and confirmed by at least two or three witnesses, there is to be no conviction or hearsay or tittle-tattle. 2Cor.13v1. In the whole of the New Testament there is no such thing as a group of ministers gathering to discipline and excommunicate at their own will; there must be no secret sessions or private condemnations, justice has not only to be done, it has to be seen to be done by all the local church. Failure to do this puts the 'judges' in the way of discipline from Christ Himself. If we fail to follow Christ's pattern of church discipline, then Jesus, as the Head of the Church, personally disciplines the saints that He loves. This is why some of the Corinthians had died, and many others of them were very ill, so that they would not be condemned with the world. If we will judge ourselves, we will have no need of Christ's discipline and judgement. 1Cor.11v23-33. **The Lord's supper is either a place of cleansing or a place of condemnation.**

Immorality, dishonesty, heresy, and the like have to be publicly dealt with by the whole local church, and believers who will not repent of wrong are to be shunned. Matt 18v17, 1Cor 5v1-5,9-13, 1Cor 6v4-10. **However, the aim of discipline is not mere punishment, it is the preservation of the church and the restoration of the offender.** 1Cor 5v5, 2Tim 2v17, 1Tim 1v20, Rom 12v19-21, Gal 6v1. The Scripture also makes it clear that a person is a heretic who rejects Jesus as their Saviour and divine Lord. 1John 4v1-5, 2John v9,10, Gal 1v6-9. Rejection of apostles and their writings by Christians, was to result in their company being shunned and the person looked upon as a perverted and sinful Christian. 2Thess 3v6,14,15, Titus 3v10,11. If a person loved the pre-

eminence they could be cast out. 3John v9,10. No one can be accused unless there is firm evidence; the elders are not to be accused unless there are two or three positive witnesses. 1Tim 5v19. **The emphasis should always be upon mercy and longsuffering, where this is at all possible.** However certain sins are so serious that severe spiritual discipline has to take place, this can involve direct judgement from God, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira; or the delivering to Satan for discipline as in the case of the wicked man of 1Cor 5v1-5, and Hymenaeus and Alexander. 1Tim 1v20. **Notice, those who upset the faith of Christians with wrong doctrine are dealt with in the same way as the immoral.** The exercise of the gift of faith in judgement was performed in the New Testament by the whole local church, or by apostolic ministry. 1Cor 5v1-5, 4v21, 2Cor 1v23, 13v10. This kind of disciplines brought a very healthy fear of God upon the early Church. Acts 2v43, 5v11.

The Lord Jesus warns us that religious people will excommunicate us, when we fulfil His words, and follow Him and others who have prophesied and preached God's Word. Luke 6v22,23. This was certainly fulfilled; the Jewish Christians knew what it was to suffer the temporary and permanent cutting off of religious and social privileges (the "Niddui" and "herem,") and even the solemn handing over, with fearful curses, to God for judgement and final perdition, (the "shammata.")

Religion that rejects God's workings, loves to act as if it was acting on His behalf, many solemn excommunications done in the great name of God, have really been the workings of Satan. The true Christian must expect to be slandered, opposed, criticised and persecuted by religious people, just as the Lord Jesus was. **If there is no Satanic opposition we should really doubt if we are really serving the Lord as we should.** Luke 6v26. When the Church of Christ acts as His body and ministers His life and love, there is an inevitable response from the dark powers that control the minds of men. Let us go forward in the steps of our crucified and risen Lord, in Heaven it will all seem such a small sacrifice for what He has done for us.

Christ Ordained Local, Self-Governing Churches.

1) The local Church is not a building, it is a group of born-again Christians.

The early Church had no external visible organisation in the form of buildings; there was not even an official meeting place for Christians. **Christian believers gathered for fellowship at any place or hour that was suitable.** These meetings usually took place in homes, the open-air, or even in the catacombs, the place and time being decided at the convenience of each group of Christians. There was liberty as to where and when Christians could worship. Christ stated in Matt 18v20, that two or three Christians gathered together in His name could know His blessing and presence. In John 4v19-24, Jesus said that Christian believers can worship God anywhere and at any time, without a Temple, or any kind of building. Christ's Church organisation did not follow the empire building and power structures of men, or even of Old Testament Jewry. The Israelites spoke with great reverence of the Temple as, "The house of the Lord," and they had consecrated buildings for worship, yet in the New Testament, there is no mention of Christian church buildings, and no hint that they are thought to be desirable or necessary. Paul states that every Christian is a temple of God, and God's glory is going to be manifested through Christians, not in buildings made of bricks and mortar by human hands. Acts 7v46-50, 17v24, 1Cor 3v16,17, 2Cor 6v16, John 2v21.

A New Testament local church consisted of all the Christians in an area or locality. It was not a Gospel Hall, Mission, or any other kind of church building. All churches in the New Testament are local churches; there are no churches larger than a locality. The smallest part of a local church was the church in a house, but it was linked to the other Christians in that area, who met in other homes. If the locality was large and there were many thousands of converts, as at Jerusalem and Rome, there were many house fellowships. **Paul instructs these fellowships not to be cliquish, and so they gathered together for fellowship, and to discuss matters of importance, or to hear outstanding ministry.** The whole church in a locality made up the body of Christ in that area. **If a church is not as wide in its outlook as the body of Christ in a locality, it is sectarian.** We should recognise that every truly born-again Christian is part of the Church of Christ in that area. We should follow the divine pattern and wisdom of meeting together to hear outstanding ministry, and also gather in house meetings for fellowship, and sharing in order to develop ministry and spiritual growth. Acts 2v46, 4v31, 5v12,42, 6v2-7, 10v27,28,30, 15v4,12,22,23,30, 20v7,17-37. Evangelism can take place both in large meeting, or small house meeting. Acts 5v12,42, 28v23-30.

Quite a considerable part of the remarkable things that took place in the life and ministry of Christ, took place in homes. The worship of Christ by the wise men took place in a home. Matt 2v11. Christ healed Peter's wife's mother in Peter's home. Matt 8v14, Mark 1v29, Luke 4v38. Christ ate with, and ministered to, sin-sick, needy souls in Matthew's house. Mark 2v15, Luke 5v29. Jesus brought peace to a sinful woman in a home. Matt 7v36-49. Jesus had wonderful fellowship in the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Luke 10v38, John 11v5. Jesus and His apostles centred their operations around the homes of sympathetic friends and helpers. Matt 13v1, 17v25, Mark 2v1, 9v33, 10v10, Acts 10v6,17,32, 16v15, 18v7,8, 28v40, Matt 10v12,13,14, Mark 6v10, Luke 9v4, 10v4,5,7.

Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead in a home. Matt 9v23, Luke 8v51. He healed the Syrophenician daughter lying sick and demon-possessed a distance away in her home. Mark 7v24-30. Christ healed a paralytic in a persons home. Mark 2v1-12. The Lords supper took place in a home. Matt 26v3, Luke 22v10.

The early Church carried on Christ's practice of ministering in homes. It was in a house that the Holy Spirit fell on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2v2. The disciples who were converted on the day of Pentecost used their homes for fellowship and the Lord's Supper. Acts 2v46. The risen Christ sent Ananias to help Paul in a house, and Paul was healed and filled with the Holy Spirit as a result. Acts 9v11,17. God instructed Cornelius to ask Peter to come to his house to preach the truth; the result was a glorious revival. Acts 10v2,22, 30,44-48, 11v12-14. The disciples had a prayer meeting in Mark's house for Peter's deliverance, and God answered their prayers. Acts 12v12-19. **The early Church fellowship meetings were centred around homes, this is an indisputable fact of Scripture as well as of Church history.** Acts 2v2,46, 5v12, 12v12, 20v7-9, 21v8-12, Rom 16v3-5,23, 1Cor 16v19, Col 4v15, Philemon v2. Paul persecuted the Christians who were meeting in homes, before he himself became a Christian. Acts 8v3.

The fellowship between Christian groups was wisely limited in times of severe persecution, to protect the Christians in these groups. When the Prefect Rusticus examined Justin Martyr (scourged and beheaded for Christ in approx. 166 AD), and asked him, "Where do you assemble?" Justin answered, "wherever it suits each ones PREFERENCE and ABILITY. You take it for granted we all meet in the same place; but this is not so, for the God of the Christians is not circumscribed by place, but being invisible fills heaven and earth and is everywhere worshipped and glorified by the faithful." Rusticus then asked, "Tell me where you meet together, or in what place you collect your disciples?" Justin answered, "I am staying at the house of one Martinas, and I know no other place of meeting besides this, and if one wished to come to me I communicated to him the words of truth." A quote of Neander from Justin Martyr.

We can see, then, that when Paul speaks of there being divisions at Corinth, in 1Cor 1v10-14, 3v1-9, he is not speaking of the Christians in Corinth dividing up into separate groups for fellowship; in a city of 100,000, as at Corinth, and many converts, the division into smaller groups for close fellowship was essential. Acts 18v9-11. The thing that Paul is condemning is the lack of recognition, love and fellowship between these groups, it appears some refused to fellowship in larger groups with the whole local church in that area, or when they did they were full of pride, criticism, and a sense of superiority. This kind of attitude made profitable Christian fellowship quite impossible, and Paul tells them that while they persisted in this attitude, they were carnal and immature babies, and could not hope to progress spiritually. 1Cor 1v2,12, 3v4. This same condemnation applies today to those who will not recognise other truly converted Christians.

A.T. Robertson says the Greek "hairesis," our "heresy," means simply a choosing, from "haireomai," to choose, to take for oneself, and then a chosen opinion, then in a bad sense as a party or faction. Gal 5v20, 1Cor 11v19. It is used to describe a school of thought, like that of the Sadducees in Acts 5v17; of the Pharisees in Acts 15v5; and in Acts 24v5, Paul uses it of Christians. Christianity was a sect everywhere spoken against. Acts 28v22. **In Gal 5v20, "haireseis" means "choosings," or "preferences," and is division on the grounds of doctrinal belief.**

Vincent says "haireseis" means 'parties', into which divisions crystallise." The word occurs in Acts 5v17, 15v5, 24v5,14, 26v5, 28v22, 1Cor 11v19, Gal 5v20, 2Pet 2v1. **Paul tells us that if we make emphasis upon certain nonessential doctrines and Christian teachers a cause of division, we are working after the flesh.** Damnable heresies will of necessity produce division, 2Pet 2v1, Titus 3v10, 1John 4v1-5, **but there should be no antagonism or division between local leaders or Christians, on the grounds of human personality, doctrinal preference, race, politics, social standing, denominational affiliation, or like or dislike of various ministries. The body is one.** However, we see in Acts 13v42-48, 14v19 and 19v8-10, how Paul could no longer have fellowship with the Jews because they contradicted Paul and blasphemed the truth that he taught, and persecuted him. One can well understand how very upset the Jews were when they saw their members accepting Paul's teaching and leaving their fellowship, but what alternative was there when they were so hard-hearted, stubborn, malicious and unbelieving. When the Jews spoke against Paul's doctrine and refused to believe, he had no other alternative but depart from them and separate the disciples from the corrupting influence of these Jews. The same thing can happen today between Christians experiencing revival, and those who are content with their church tradition, and reject the Holy Spirit's ministries, and so separation may be unavoidable. However, bitterness should be avoided like the plague, we may like the Lord Jesus speak the truth with feeling, but not in a bad temper. Matt 23v1-39, Acts 28v23-30.

Churches can vary a great deal in their spiritual condition. Having local churches and house fellowships does not automatically solve every problem, there has to be wise leadership and permanent abiding in Christ for spiritual progress. Some churches and house fellowships are centres of revival, Bible teaching, fellowship, and manifest God's power and love through spiritual gifts. Others churches, like some of the churches in Revelation, have serious problems, and even grave sin in them. Some are self-centred, religious clubs with no evangelistic emphasis. Some have merely transferred one-man ministry and

formality from the church building to the home, and the same cast iron bondage with it.

2) There is no Church federation seen in the New Testament.

The New Testament local church was a voluntary, self-supporting, self-propagating society, with no subordination to outside ecclesiastical centres or civil authority. There is certainly no church federation seen in the New Testament, we read that all the believers in a city were a church, 1Cor 1v2; there are the churches of a district or an area. 2Cor 8v1, Gal 1v2, Acts 9v31. **The smallest expression of the universal Church was the church in a house.** Meetings in various homes or other suitable places soon replaced the meetings in Temple or synagogue. Acts 2v2,46, 5v12,42, 10v2,22,30,44-48, 12v12-19, 20v7-9, 21v8-12, Rom 16v3-5,23, 1Cor 16v19, Col 4v15, Philemon v2. **Each local church was made up of all the Christians in an area, and each house fellowship had to answer to its spiritual oversight.**

The ministries that founded infant churches, obviously had a real interest in the spiritual welfare of those that they had brought to Christ, and nourished in the faith, they did, however, leave the oversight of the local church in the hands of local men as soon as possible. Paul exercised a loving apostolic oversight, but it was not just an official position, it was a divine ministry gift and the superintendence of love. **No apostle had the right to found a private church or denomination; the authority of an apostle was moral and spiritual not official.**

Apostles have a very real and definite delegated spiritual authority from God, not only to be a channel of blessing, but also to act in spiritual discipline and judgement. This was not just mere talk, but a very real operation of the power of God in judgement. Acts 5v1-11, 13v9-12, 1Cor 5v1-5, 4v21, 2Cor 1v23, 13v10, 1Tim 1v20. The leaders of Bethlehem trembled when Samuel came to them, because of his ministry and authority from God, they realised that you could not play the fool with someone who manifested mighty spiritual gifts and acted on God's behalf. For the same reason there was a very healthy respect for apostles in the New Testament, and great fear fell on all the Church and the outsiders, when Ananias and Sapphira died through Peter's authority in God. 1Sam 15v1-5, Acts 5v1-13.

NB: People joined the New Testament Church by baptism in Water.

Baptism in water proclaims to all that we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and demonstrates our faith in Jesus, and identifies us with Him in His death and resurrection. It is a public witness to all that Jesus not only died but rose again, and that we are now dead to the old life and walk a new life in Christ. Rom 6v3-5,11, Gal 2v20, 1Cor 15v1-4, 2Cor 5v17. In Rom 6v4, "buried," "sunthapto," does not mean, to put down under the ground and cover up, it speaks of the performing of burial rites, and the disposing of a dead body, by either burial or burning. However, though Christ was not buried under ground, He was entombed, which for all practical purposes had the same effect. Our old life has been disposed of, for we account ourselves as dead with Christ to the old life, and publicly witness to our determination to follow our risen Lord. **It is not just adults, but believers who are to be baptised, that is, people who are old enough to believe and receive the Gospel truth.** Acts 2v37-42, 8v12,13,36-3, 9v17,18, 10v44-48, 16v14,15,31-33, 18v8, 19v1-7, 22v16, Matt 28v19, 3v2,3,6.

In the New Testament baptism is always linked with repentance and faith, and people should be baptised almost immediately after conversion. **Baptism followed repentance and faith in Jesus, it did not precede it, only those who believe in Jesus should be baptised.** Any believer, not only New Testament leaders, could baptise a convert. Acts 8v12,13, 1Cor 1v13-17. Every believer should be baptised, but unbaptised believers should not be excluded from the Lord's Supper or Christian fellowship. **In the New Testament there is no other kind of church membership recorded other than baptism in water.** In 1Cor 12v13, we see **the Holy Spirit was the agent of regeneration, baptism in water was the outward sign of regeneration,** no other act of church membership was necessary. **It is a remarkable thing that Christ took the sinners place, not only on the cross, and in Hades, He identified Himself with us in baptism.** Mark 1v11, Luke 3v21, Matt 3v15.

The Greek word "baptizo" is used for both baptism in water and baptism in the Spirit. "Bapto," "to dip," only occurs three times in the New Testament, in Luke 16v24, John 13v26 and Rev 19v13. In Rev 19v13, "bapto" is used in its secondary sense to dye or stain. The primary meaning of "baptizo," is "to immerse," or "to submerge," but in its secondary meaning, which is developed from its primary meaning, refers to the influence which one thing exercises over another. "Baptizo," then, can speak not only of an immersion, but also of an impregnation, and infusion of the element in which it is baptised, as in dyeing or staining, it speaks of a bringing into complete subjection to an influence, and an imbibing of the virtues and nature of that influence. We should also note that in many cases, though not in every case, the same distinction occurs between the Greek words "bapto" and "baptizo," as between the English equivalents, "to dip" and "to immerse," the one being a momentary or temporary covering, the other usually implying a prolonged or permanent covering.

In reference to baptism in water "baptizo" is used in the weaker sense of "bapto," to dip, otherwise all those who are baptised would be drowned. "Baptizo" is used in the New Testament in its sense of permanent immersion and infusion, in regard to baptism unto repentance and remission of sins, and in baptism in the name of the Trinity, and baptism into the body of Christ, and baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire. Matt 3v11, Mark 1v4, Luke 3v16, Matt 28v19, 1Cor 12v13. These baptisms do not speak of a temporary dipping in an element; they speak of being permanently and abidingly under the influence of the thing suggested. To be baptised unto repentance and remission of sins, means being brought under the power and influence of repentance and remission of sins, not for a moment, but for all time. To be baptised into Christ's death and resurrection, as Paul states in Rom 6v3-11, is to be permanently identified with Christ in them, and receive all the benefits and influences of them, not for a moment, but for ever. To be baptised with the Holy Spirit and fire, means that our whole personality is permanently impregnated with and under the influence of the presence, power and sanctifying purity of the Holy Spirit. To be baptised into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is not just a mere baptismal formula, it is to come under the power and influence of the Trinity, not for a moment but permanently and eternally. To be baptised into the body of Christ, is the permanent placing of ourselves under the influence and power of Christ and His body, the Church. Baptism, then, is more than an outward sign; it is the placing of oneself, under the headship of Christ. The important thing is not just to go through the form of water baptism, but also to have the whole personality imbued, stained, impregnated, and influenced, abidingly and permanently with Christ's death and resurrection life, and all their accompanying benefits.

Scholars admit with Dean Stanley, that baptism means "a plunge, an entire submersion in deep water," and say it was the universal form of baptism until the 13th Century. The Greek word for "sprinkle," "rhantizo," is used in Heb 12v24 and 1Pet 1v2, but it is not used in relation to Christian baptism. The words for "pour," such as "ballo," John 13v5 and "katacheo," Matt 26v7, and "ekcheo" Rev 16v1-4,8,10,12,17, "ekchuno" Luke 22v20, and "epicheo" Luke 10v34, are not used in relation to Christian baptism. **It is a monstrous lie to say that infants who die unsprinkled or unbaptised are lost eternally, it can be said to those who say such things, "in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines, the precepts of men."** Matt 15v7-9.

Though we see infant churches being helped by the leading ministries of other churches, Acts 13v1-4, there is no trace in the New Testament of any church being directed by another church, the unity of Christ's Church was a spiritual fellowship and unity, not an organisational unity. Churches could give "the right hand of fellowship" to visiting Christians or Christian ministries, or give "letters of recommendation" to well-respected Christians who had ministry gifts, but there was no central government by men. Gal 2v9, Acts 15v25, 18v27, 1Cor 16v10, Col 4v10, 2Cor 8v22. The right hand of fellowship was not church membership, it was recognising a person as a fellow Christian. In Gal 2v9, we see the right hand of fellowship pushed to one side the accusing Judaizers, and united Paul with the apostles as an equal in God's work. In the New Testament, there was a lovely spiritual fellowship, not a formal membership; a formal membership, which has no spiritual fellowship and unity, is like a skeleton without flesh and life. The New Testament Church had a recognised doctrinal standard, but it was the simple and lovely bond of love for Christ and each other that was the basis of New Testament membership. In Acts 2v42-46, we see a truly lovely fellowship of saints, a mutual love of indescribable beauty. The blessing of God upon their informal, spiritual, friendly gatherings, not only made them enjoyable, but spiritually enriching and heavenly, so different from so many of today's formal and dry meetings, that have to be endured rather than enjoyed.

Even as late as the middle of the third century, the independence of each local church was still insisted upon; Cyprian, martyred 258 AD, was probably one of the strongest advocates of Church unity, but he insisted that in each community each shepherd was only responsible to God. Christ is the Head of a body united by love, and Church unity is built upon mutual love, not upon ecclesiastical discipline and authority. **To the outsider, the early Church looked very fragile and easy to destroy, but actually it was very strong and grew with incredible speed.** There is no stronger bond than that of fervent Christian love, and no organisation and direction better than that received from Christ. The early Church enjoyed the loving superintendence of apostolic and other leading ministries, and recognition of other churches and their ministries, but there was no domination of the local church by people outside of the local church.

3) How the departure from the early Church organisation took place.

The first things to go were the leadership of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and a Christ-directed body ministry. Then elders, plural, were replaced by a presiding elder, who later took over the rule of the whole local church. The second stage was an affiliation of churches in conference, whose decisions, though at first advisory, became more and more binding upon the churches, and power became concentrated into the hands of the representatives of these churches. The representative's authority then came to depend, not upon his spirituality, but on the size and importance of the population of the area that he represented. The third stage of church federation was the upholding of ecclesiastical traditions and decisions by civil power. Those who desire a much more complete study upon this can read Dr. Hatch's (The Organization Of The Early Christian Churches) outstanding book on this subject.

We need to remember our Lord's anger at the unscriptural traditions of the religious leaders of His day, when we reject the Word of God and replace it with the traditions of men. Matt 15v1-13, 23v1-39, Mark 7v1-23, Luke 11v37-54. God is just as unhappy today with traditions that make void His Word, and frustrate His will and purposes. **Religious leaders, who cling to men's traditions and reject Gods truth, will never have a revival.** They invariably reject Christians who have been given ministry gifts by Christ, just as the religious leaders of Christ's day rejected Christ and the ministries that He had appointed, and hindered the workings of the Spirit of God. 1Pet 2v4. Christ called Israel's religious leaders "hypocrites," and He said that their worship was vain. Christ told His disciples to leave these blind leaders of the blind alone, for God was going to root them up and deal with them, this is good advice for us to follow. Matt 15v1-14.

4) The great evils that Church federation can lead to.

I again want to make it quite clear that I am not against denominational churches. I certainly do not want to censure and destroy the beautiful, inspiring and beneficial acts of worship that take place in denominational buildings, but I do want to see an end to denominational bigotry, unscriptural tradition, and resistance to the Holy Spirit's workings. **Denominational buildings can, like the school of Tyrannus, be centres of evangelism, teaching, fellowship and revival, if godly men lead them.**

We must above all remember that love suffers long and is kind; we must speak the truth in love and not in condemnation. Let us exercise patience and Christian love with those who are seeking God, but find it difficult to break from the mental prisons of their own traditions. Jesus has been so loving, patient and kind to us in our stupidity, slothfulness, waywardness and pride. Let us forgive one another as Christ has forgiven us. Eph 4v31,32. **The way to break down the barriers between churches is for Christians to have fellowship and prolonged prayer together, in Christ's presence barriers disappear and love and mercy triumph.** Let us now go on to consider the dangers of denominationalism.

a) Church federation almost invariably leads to a sectarian bigotry that shocks the world.

The unbeliever will accept the fact that when there are many Christians, they will need to meet in different places, but they are greatly hindered from becoming Christians by denominational bigotry and the consequent bitter spirit and rivalry that many Christians manifest to each other. Christ said, "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, and by your love to one another." John 13v34,35, 15v10-14. **A false imitation unity and love and denominational mergers will not deceive the world, they want to see genuine Christian love between Christians, then, and not before, the world will believe.** John 17v20-23.

The beloved Grimshaw, though a Church of England minister himself, built three churches for other denominations when they moved into his area, he was not going to have competitive division in Christ's body, we need to imitate his magnanimous spirit. Organic unity into one massive ecclesiastical system is entirely unscriptural and undesirable, we do not want one great denomination governed by men, we need one body united under the Lordship of Christ. **Indeed, ecclesiastical central government by men, in reality usurps Christ's prerogative of guiding His local and universal Church, as He thinks best, and shows a real unbelief in the fact that Christ is personally guiding His local and universal Church.**

Denominationalism and church federation produce and perpetuate division in Christ's Church. It is a striking fact that in a few years after 1848, the Wesleyan Methodists lost about one hundred thousand members, because they insisted on the supremacy of the Methodist Conference, instead of the independence of the local church fellowships like those of the early Church. Churches whose basis of fellowship is mutual love springing from recognition of Christ as Saviour and Lord, give a real testimony to the world. Many Christians have restricted their view of the Church and Christian fellowship to one denomination, instead of recognising, embracing, and fellowshiping with all true believers in Christ. Indeed, Christians who have this wider New Testament view of Christ's Church, are looked upon as "unfaithful to our movement," or as "unreliable rolling stones," if they do not restrict their ministry and fellowship to one denomination. Whatever a person's denomination, if they are "born again," and know Christ and the Father in a living way, they are our brother or sister in Christ. **Paul tells us that if we perpetuate these man-made divisions and do not recognise other Christian believers, we are carnal and immature spiritual babies.** 1Cor 3v1. Those who say "I am holier than thou" are a smoke in God's nostrils. Isaiah 65v5.

A denominational spirit narrows a Christian's outlook and limits a proper vision of Christ's Church. The early Christians called themselves believers, brethren, disciples, saints, followers of the way, and Christ's Church, they did not recognise any need for an organisational name, or man-made ecclesiastical structure. Faith, fellowship and love were the uniting bonds of the early Church. It is possible that the name of "Christian" has been given divine approval, for in Acts 11v26, "called," is "chrematisai," the aorist infinitive of "chrematizo." For Peter uses it in 1Pet 4v16, to describe believers in Jesus. "Chrematizo," is also used in the sense of a Divine command in Matt 2v12,22,

Luke 2v26 and Acts 10v22, and in Rom 7v3 for "called." See also Matt 2v12,22, Luke 2v26, Acts 10v22, Rom 7v3 Heb 8v5, 11v7, 12v25, for "chrematizo." Some think the Gentiles gave this name to the Christians to distinguish them from the Jews. Acts 11v26, 26v28, 1Pet 4v16. It is only used once to describe Christians in the apostolic writings, by Peter in 1Pet 4v16, the more tender and intimate words of "beloved," "believer," "sister," "brethren," "disciple" and "saint" are the words that are used to describe Christians and their relationship to each other and to Christ. **Jesus is the Head of a remarkable family, linked together by our love for Him and each other. It is love that binds the Church together and gives a testimony to the world, not constitutions or ecclesiastical machinery.**

b) Church federation usurps Christ's authority and usually frustrates His plans and ministries.

Christ is the head of the Church, but men love to usurp His authority and to take the power into their own hands. Even church affiliation is very dangerous if it results in power being concentrated into the hands of a very few representatives, for this inevitably leads to Christ's Lordship over His flocks being replaced by men's rule. When Christian leaders become spiritual dictators and are touchy about their position and authority, they have never partaken of the Spirit of Christ, and lost the view of Christ's Lordship over His Church. The rule of men nearly always results in the rejection and isolation of the ministries that Christ has set in the Church, and they are not able to minister in churches because of denominational closed-shop attitudes.

Though the New Testament apostles are universally praised by today's modern churches, it is very doubtful if any of them would be accepted by the vast majority of today's churches. Healings, tongues, miracles, and hot sermons, are certainly not wanted, and are often opposed by most of today's church leaders. Most of the religious leaders of Christ's day opposed Him, and in the end succeeded in killing Him. **We need "the authority from Heaven" that Jesus and John Baptist experienced.**

Jesus did not desire or seek position in men's organisations, or their approval, authority and backing, He was content to do His Father's will, and be a blessing. Jesus never tried to join or start a religious hierarchy, He bypassed the religious leaders of His day and chose simple, unlearned men, of poor education, to be His apostles and lead His Church. God chose men who had a burning love for Jesus, and whose limitations made them depend on Him. **Paul said that Christ chooses nobodies to lead in His Church, and said that he gloried in everything that made him Christ-dependent, so that Christ's power would rest upon him.** 1Cor 1v26-32, 2Cor 12v7-10. The idea that a person should not be allowed to minister unless they have high academic and intellectual qualifications is completely foreign to the New Testament.

c) Church federation usually replaces body ministry with one-man ministry.

When divine ordination is replaced with human ordination, and one-man ministry replaces body ministry, the effect upon the spiritual life of a church is disastrous. Paul tells us that Christians should minister to each other as a body works together, often the least talented, naturally speaking, being the greatest blessing because of the manifestation of God's "charismata" through them. 1Cor 12v4-7,21-25, Rom 12v4-13. This was a fundamental principal of New Testament ministry and fellowship. The churches recognised teachers should not monopolise ministry, all have a part to play in the local church. Eph 4v1-16.

There was also a very definite place for an evangelistic mission in the New Testament, with one person having the leading part in debate, as in Paul's missions. Acts 14v12, 19v8-10. However, if we are to completely follow the New Testament, dialogue and reasoning should take place in both local church fellowship and evangelistic mission. "Dialegomai," occurs in Acts 17v2,17, 18v4,19, 19v8,9, 20v7,9, 24v12,25. "Reasoning," "suzeeto," occurs in Acts 6v9, 9v29. Some church buildings fulfil well the purpose of missions, even if they do not permit New Testament dialogue. We must also remember that Paul did not found missions buildings, he founded local churches with body ministry. **It is quite Scriptural and correct to rent a building for evangelistic purposes, as it appears Paul did at Ephesus, but it is wrong only to have an evangelistic mission, missions should found churches with New Testament body ministry.** The problem with buying and building consecrated buildings, is that it is so financially demanding and time consuming, that it can seriously restrict the practical helping of the poor and needy, which was the main use of New Testament church finances.

The Old Testament guild of priests, which left God's people in a state of permanent dependence and religious pupilage, has no place in Christianity. There is a change from the Old Testament prophetic and priestly offices, which had a mediating and exclusive ministry, to the New Testament priesthood and ministry of all believers. 1Pet 2v5,9, Rev 1v6. **All Christians can minister, as God illuminates and leads.** 1Cor 12v7. The Old Testament priestly and prophetic offices were imperfect, because by being mediatory, they excluded God's people from close fellowship with God. **In this age of grace, only Christ, the High Priest, has a ministry of mediation between the Father and Christians. Though the Church has important and leading ministries, they do not mediate between Christians and their God.**

The guidance of a local church was not placed in the hands of one person; the local church was to be centred on God, not on any human leader. The domination of a church by even a gracious person can check the development of ministry in the church and hinder the movings of the Holy Spirit. Many modern church leaders resist the New Testament pattern of body ministry, and follow the Old Testament idea of exclusive priestly office, and desire their congregations to remain babies forever. This denies the New Testament principle of body ministry, and keeps Christians in a state of permanent pupilage and dependence on their religious leaders. It is a tragedy that the training of many modern clergy is aimed at producing priest-dependence. Denominations usually choose leaders who have the intellectual and academic qualifications and ability to lead churches, without any help from their congregations.

We do not place a premium upon ignorance, but we must note that Jesus chose unlearned men of poor education to be His apostles; they had to depend on God or fail. Natural ability can be a hindrance instead of a help in God's work, if we depend on it instead of God. In 1Cor 1v26-31, we read that God's choice of leaders humbles human pride and brings greater glory to God. What was true in New Testament times is often true today, a person ordained by men, and given a religious status, is not necessarily ordained by God, and a person who is ordained by God, is often not recognised by religious denominations.

d) Church federation usually leads to self-dependence and pride.

Denominationalism encourages a false feeling of power, pride and self-sufficiency. A large or growing organisation can give a completely false sense of achievement, and lead to something even worse, a reliance in a denomination's resources instead of God. When churches or denominations feel that they can say, "I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing," or "Is not this great Babylon that I have built," they are in a very dangerous spiritually bankrupt condition. Pride of denomination and reliance on human resources, should be seen for the serious sins that they are. Dan 4v28-37, Rev.3v17. Uzziah was marvellously helped by God until he was strong, then his heart was lifted up and he did corruptly. 2Chron 26v1-21. The same feeling of security and worldly influence has often had the identical effect upon churches and denominations. **When a denomination directs and supplies every material need, church leaders feel very little need to seek, trust, or wait on God for His guidance and power, and so churches become spiritually dead and lifeless.** It is a tragedy when church leaders equate worldly influence and power, with spiritual power and spiritual success, they usually mean the very reverse.

Many churches that manifest spiritual gifts can suffer from the same spiritual complacency and self-sufficiency as the church at Laodicea. Many churches seldom, or never, experience any spiritual gifts other than tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy, yet it is the other six gifts that make all the difference between victory and defeat for churches. People come into most of today's churches, with deep spiritual, physical and emotional burdens and other great problems, and yet there is no real attempt to meet these poor people's heart-cries to God for help. Teaching or tradition is looked upon as sufficient, and leaders are content with the superficial, and people never have their deep needs met, year in and year out. The churches that do this are in the same condition as the church at Laodicea, and like that church, they do not know, or will not admit their need, as Christ said, **"Thou knowest not,** that thou art wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked."

In many churches, Jesus is longing to meet the heart-broken needs of people, but is firmly excluded from doing so by the arrogant self-satisfaction, stubborn self-will, and crippling traditions of these churches. Even though the Lord Jesus looks upon even Laodicean churches with His great and wonderful compassion, He can only look upon such a state of affairs, as criminal negligence, and on the day when He judges His Church He will certainly say so. Rev 3v19-22.

Paul did not depend on oratory or excellency of speech, when he came to Corinth, he relied on the demonstration and power of the Spirit. 1Cor 2v1-5. This is just the opposite of most churches today, who imitate David's great sin of numbering Israel, and so prove that they are relying on, and glorying in, their numbers, worldly possessions and influence. 1Chron 21v1-30. God reprov'd David, and started to destroy the thing that David gloried in, He can do the same with us, let us "do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God." Micah 6v8. **Let us make sure that we are Christ-dependent, not self-dependent, or denomination-dependent, and let us carefully watch our traditions.** Church tradition, like the tradition of the Jews, can replace the desires, commands, doctrines and workings of God, with men's teaching and practice, and a form can be perpetuated that hinders, or even excludes, the mighty workings of the Holy Spirit.

e) Church federation usually leads to unscriptural and worldly power structures.

As we have already seen, all Christians in local churches took part in important local decisions; but in modern denominations, the power usually resides in the hands of a few ordained representatives. Men usually ordain those

who will do the will of their denomination, and so they perpetuate their own kind of power structure and make the ministry a closed shop, and only those who conform can join. The Lordship of Christ over the Church's ministries is replaced by the rule of men. Denominations can get to the place where they have enough financial wealth and ecclesiastical machinery to perpetuate their own type of power structure and standards without any help from God. Church history has proved that denominations, like the world, will fight to obtain and retain, power, wealth, prestige, influence and position. **Satan fell through this same love of power, he lusted after God's position and for adulation and power, and proud men have done exactly the same thing in the Church.**

The struggle for power.

It is a striking fact that Jesus was totally financially destitute, and came to preach His Gospel to the poor, and that the early Church consisted mainly of people of little political power, wealth and influence. 2Cor 8v9, Luke 4v18, 1Cor 1v26-31. Constantine used the Church as a means of exercising political power and control, and many others followed his example, until church organisations became an instrument of power and influence in the hands of the powerful and wealthy. Love of power has pervaded all denominations and has destroyed their spiritual vitality and effectiveness. It is a great tragedy that most denominations and churches, large and small, have become largely concerned with upholding their power structure, prestige and worldly influence. Some denominations have great worldly wealth and influence, but they are lacking in spiritual power. **The spiritual power a church possesses is nearly always inversely proportional to its worldly wealth, influence, and ecclesiastical complexity.** Men love to pass minutes, resolutions, and constitutions, and these man-made traditions, like the traditions of Judaism, often replace the truth of the Holy Scriptures. Matt 15v1-9, Mark 7v1-13. How easily the precepts of men can replace and frustrate the will and Word of God. Some conference resolutions and church minutes have made many churches and denominations secure against revival. Every church minute that narrows the fellowship of the local church is not of God, and will have to be answered for at the judgement seat of Christ.

The resistance to the Holy Spirit. Acts 7v51-53.

It is a striking fact of Church History, that churches or denominations, which have lost God's blessing, use their worldly power and influence to resist a move of the Holy Spirit. Genuine revivals of religion have always been violently opposed by unspiritual religious leaders, who have been determined to preserve their power structures. **Churches and denominations, which have been formed out of the fruits of a spiritual revival, and have lost the revival fire, are often the bitter opponents of a new revival, because it exposes their own spiritual need, and threatens their power structure and their position as spiritual leaders.** The Jews murdered Christ because they were envious of His spiritual power, and because they thought that He was threatening their power structure. John 11v47,48, Acts 13v44-47, Matt 27v17,18.

The fear of the Ephesian idol makers, of losing their prestige, position, and wealth, caused them to violently oppose Paul, and the same base reasons have always moved men to oppose genuine revival. Men love to have despotic power, and try to make people conform to their standards and system. Acts 19v23-28. It becomes obvious from a study of Church history, that Satan has often used federated churches, and state controlled church systems, to kill and persecute the true children of God. **Suppression of truly spiritual Christians has always followed church federation and organic church unity, as surely as night follows day.** Church history proves that federated churches have often proved as good an instrument of Satan for persecution, as the pagan Roman Empire. However, persecution of true Christians in a genuine move of God, is by no means limited to state churches or older denominations, the last move of God that has dried up and lost God's power and become an denomination, has often been a great hindrance, and the most bitter opponent, of God's new move of the Holy Spirit.

As denominations, fellowships and churches begin to get away from God and lose the blessing of God, they try to preserve their structure by emphasising faithfulness to that organisation and subservience to its leaders, regardless of whether they are fulfilling a spiritual ministry from Christ or not. Ministers often spend much of their time praising and uplifting their denomination, and emphasise faithfulness to their denomination and its ordained ministers, and there is often little reference to faithfulness to Christ and His New Testament standards. The glorious loving leadership and true fellowship of the early Church cannot be compared to this denominational bondage.

In John 13, Jesus washed His disciples feet to show them that Christian leaders are to serve God's people in love, not to lord it over them. **The love of power in the apostles had blinded their eyes; they were fighting for position and power a few hours before the Cross.** Jesus clearly demonstrated to them, by washing their feet, that they should serve each other in genuine humility and love. In Matt 20v20-28, James and John asked for position and power in the kingdom, but Jesus told them that the leading positions in His kingdom were for the most humble, sacrificial and loving, and that leaders in His Church were to be servants not overbearing lords. Jesus said that Christians can be "great," "megaloi," but warned us that true greatness is manifested in genuine humility and humble service. Mark 10v43,44, Luke 9v46-48, 14v11. Great Christians never "lord it over" others,

"katakurieuousin," or exercise authority as a tyrant, "katexousiazousin." Jesus said the way to be first, "protos," and "great," in God's eyes, is to minister as a bond slave, "doulos," and a menial servant, "diakonos," even as He had done. Matt 20v20-28.

In 1Pet 5v1-5, Peter tells us the very same thing, pastor-elders are not to lord it over their flocks, but are to lead by example. Church history shows us how little heed has been taken to these words of Jesus and Peter. Men have so loved their religious power structures and their position in them, that they have resisted the Holy Spirit, lied, deceived, tortured, murdered, and pillaged, to uphold and preserve their religious power structure, and they have usually done it in the name of God. John 16v1. The Scripture tells us that those who hate and kill in the name of God, are not God's children, they partake of the spirit of Satan, who was a liar and murderer from the beginning. John 8v44, 1John 2v7-11, 3v10-17, 4v20 to 5v3. When Christ's disciples wanted to call fire down from heaven upon the hostile Samaritans, Jesus rebuked them and told them that their attitude was evil, and that they should seek to save and bless, not destroy. Luke 9v51-56. **True Christians are not concerned with power structures or fighting to uphold them, they are concerned with doing the will of God, and being a channel of God's blessing.**

f) Church federation makes it easy for Satan to corrupt and persecute the Church.

If one person, or a group of ministers governs a denomination, Satan has only to influence these ministers to affect all their flocks. If a local church is ruled by one person, and has a one-man ministry, the same is true; Satan has only to influence one person to make it difficult for all. One minister, even if he is kind, moral and good, can bring a church into bondage, if he is lacking in spiritual anointing, devotion and prayer. **A minister can be a good intelligent Christian, but if he is not used to the movings of the Holy Spirit and His gifts, and body ministry, he will be a hindrance to revival.** It is also true that one can have a gracious veneer and yet determinedly resist the movings of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries cannot be received by intellectual training at theological college; they are received through communion with Christ. **Indeed, many theological collages have been corrupted by Satan, and systematically train students in unbelief, not in vital New Testament Christianity, and so a whole denomination is affected and corrupted.**

When Christians are organised into denominations, they are more easily controlled, captured, killed and persecuted, by antichristian forces, a thing that we need to take note of in these evil last days. The New Testament house fellowship is the only way that Christians can have fellowship in some countries today. The Church in Communist countries survived spiritually, because it followed the pattern of independent local churches gathered in house fellowships. The fine buildings, organs, choirs, and singing, can fulfil a useful function in our present circumstances in Western countries, but they are a burden in periods of militant persecution, and can be closed in hours, as events in many countries have proved. Men's insistence upon church federation, really prepares the Church for destruction in times of persecution. **Only a love dominated church, which fervently seeks and waits upon God in prolonged prayer, can ensure the spiritual glow that will preserve the church in persecution, and deliver the church, local and universal, from spiritual death and corruption.**

When churches tried to make a powerful system to save themselves from heresy, they brought greater evils upon their churches than they cured. The man-made form that was instituted to preserve the Church has really produced and perpetuated many forms devoid of the Holy Spirit. The form that was produced to preserve from heresy, has often produced and perpetuated that very thing. The edict of toleration of Constantine in 313 AD, and the consequent enforcement of orthodoxy by the state, was an unparalleled disaster for the Church. **The union of the state with the Church did not save the world, the world's wealth corrupted and defiled the Church and rendered it spiritually powerless. The Church exchanged worldly power, prestige, buildings and gold for true spiritual wealth, and authority.** God will not manifest His power to uphold the traditions of men. The dangerous and powerful wolves that Paul warns us of in Acts 20v29, have often been church organisations, and they have also spoken "crooked, perverted doctrines," which have greatly damaged the churches. 1Cor 1v11-13, 3John v9, 1Tim 1v20, 2Tim 1v15.

When denominations evangelise other nations, they try to impose on these nations, not a New Testament form, but their own tradition and form of worship, and these traditions and forms are often quite unacceptable to the people of the nations that they are evangelising, and they hinder the evangelistic success and spirituality of the Church. **The simple organisation of the early Church appeals to every nation.** False tradition is disastrous for evangelistic success, and Satan is happy if he can keep people conformed to these traditions. How often churches expect the unconverted to conform to their method of evangelism, without any thought of whether it is Scriptural or not. **The New Testament forms of evangelism were completely successful, Gospel preaching, either by discussion or heralding, in street, home, open-air, as well as consecrated building, such as a synagogue or Temple, brought tremendous results, because it was not only attractive and interesting, but also because it was anointed by the Holy Spirit and confirmed by mighty signs, wonders and miracles.**

Conclusion

One of the greatest evangelistic forces in the New Testament Church was its practical love and care for people; indeed, the majority of its finances (95% off) went for caring for people in need. Church buildings and ecclesiastical systems consume the vast majority of the finances that Christians can give, and often little is left for the needy, and so one of the most powerful evangelistic appeals of the Church is lost. The early Church appointed deacons in every church to do works of charity; some modern churches have followed this practice and have brought great relief and blessing to the needy. Large building projects and complex organisations are very expensive and time consuming, and hinder rapid growth; the early Church grew very rapidly by following God's simple pattern. Samuel G. Green, on page 55 of his, "A Handbook of Church History," states that Justin Martyr wrote about 140 AD, "There is not one single race of men, whether Barbarians or Greeks, or what ever they may be called, nomads or vagrants, or herdsmen living in tents; among whom prayers and giving of thanks are not offered through the name of the crucified Jesus."

Samuel Green continues, on page 56: "Gibbon and Milman estimate the population of Rome at the beginning of the third century as one million two hundred thousand, and the calculation of the former that a twentieth were nominal Christians may be adopted as a minimum." This means that there were at least 60,000 Christians in Rome at this time. The spread of the Gospel and the conversion of tens of thousands of people, had taken place without any external form of buildings or denominational organisation. If we follow Christ's New Testament pattern we shall also be amazed at the results. **There is a vital connection between following the simplicity and spirituality of the early Church organisation, and revival.**

New Testament ministries are intended to bring people into a living experimental knowledge of God and His truth. Why, then, are there so few of the higher ministries in operation? The following answers suggest themselves. Much of the fog of the dark ages of the Church is still with us, even in evangelical circles. Ministers are often conformed to the denominational mould, and anything outside this mould is viewed with suspicion and opposed. Authoritative decrees from federated church leaders has forced those under them to resist the desires and movings of the Holy Spirit, and Satan has used this to keep churches from New Testament principles and practices. Acts 7v51-53. In Church history this has resulted in Christians with God's anointing upon them being rejected, opposed and even murdered. There are few who are willing to stand the sacrifice, suffering and poverty involved in following their Lord in this way. We have to very definitely take up our cross and follow Jesus, if we are to sustain His ministry gifts to us. A divinely directed New Testament ministry gift is almost certain to involve personal Calvaries in manifesting and ministering Christ's resurrection life. Many preachers are unwilling to walk this way, preferring to preach and believe in a spiritually sapping and worldly "prosperity gospel." The cry from God's longing, loving, tender heart is still the same, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Let us hear His call and obey His commands, and then we shall not only see Him in glory, but also hear His "Well done." Let us say, "Here I am. Send me!" Isaiah 6v8.

Appendix IV: The Old Wineskins And Old Wine Of The Denominational Churches

Part I

The overriding reason for the failure of overcomers and individuals to rule with Christ during the Millennium to arise in the Body of Christ is because there have been no apostolic and prophetic ministries prayed into the Church by Christians. Matt 9v37,38, Mark 3v14, Acts 2v40-47, 8v14-18, 11v19-30, 12v25, 13v1-3, 14v3,21,22,23,27,28, 1Cor 4v16, 11v1, Heb 6v12, 13v7, 1Peter 5v1-4, 3John v11.

One of the main responsibilities of apostles, prophets and pastors is to inspire and guide new converts into manifesting spiritual gifts and seeking spiritual ministries. 1Cor 14v1 (1Cor 11-14v40), Eph 4v7-16.

We see Barnabus taking Paul under his wing, and by His Grace, inspiring and guiding him into the greater ministries of the Church. John 1v16, Acts 9v27, 11v25,26, 13v1-3, 12v25, 15v37-39, Rom 1v5,17. Barnabus also saw in his young cousin, John Mark, what he had earlier seen in Paul. In refusing to take him on the 2nd missionary journey with Barnabus, he had shown great zeal, but without love, and here we see the apostle who wrote 1Cor 13, writing about something he had yet to experience in his own life. Paul, in later life, realised that he had been wrong about John Mark. 2Tim 4v11.

If Barnabus hadn't taken John Mark under his wing, we would not have had Mark's Gospel (which Papias, early in the 2nd century said was Peter's account of the ministry of His Lord that had been written down accurately, though not in chronological order by John Mark. 1Peter 5v13). Peter calls John Mark "my son."

Spiritual gifts and ministries ALL flow from and by His Grace. John 1v16, 1Cor 12v4 ("gifts" in Greek is "charismata," literally "gifts of grace." They are "grace gifts" and there is absolutely nothing we can do to earn them!). 1Cor 12v28, Eph 7-16.

There is therefore a great need today for Christians to pray for God to raise up full prophetic and apostolic ministries. Matt 9v37,38.

The great lie of the Devil that spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries are not needed today and were withdrawn, only being in the Church during the 1st century has completely paralysed the Body of Christ for centuries. Joshua 24v31, Judges 2v7, 21v25, 1Sam 3v1, Prov 29v18. The effect upon the Church with no apostolic or prophetic ministries operating is the same as to what happened to Israel, "every man did which was right in his own eyes...the people cast of restraint." Judges 6v11-16, 1Sam 10v5, 1Kings 18v4, 19v16, 20v35, 2Kings 9v1. Samuel, Elisha and Elijah and the other Old Testament prophets all inspired young men and women to desire and manifest spiritual gifts and prophetic ministry.

Part II

Judaism and The Temple in Jerusalem in the days when Our Lord walked the earth had so degenerated from what God had given Moses to the state where they "had a form of godliness, but denying its power." Rom 2v19,20, 2Tim 3v5. The English word "form" in Greek is "morphosin," from "morphosis" (Strong's NT: 3446), and means "a pencilled outline (of the morphe) without any inner substance or reality, the mere outward semblance, as distinguished from the essential inner reality."

The Scribes and Pharisees were the "fundamentalists" of their day, they believed in the resurrection, angels and the miraculous. They believed God had done miracles in the past through the prophets and would again do them in the future at the resurrection, but they didn't believe God was doing miracles in their day because they weren't being done through them. Hence, they persecuted God's prophets John Baptist and Our Lord, even though they hailed and celebrated the prophets of old. Such was the viciousness of their persecution that they even accused the Lord Jesus of doing His miracles by Satanic power, and whenever God has manifested His power through His ministries from the early Church right and indeed right up to the Second Coming of Christ, these ministries will also be spoken against and accused of doing their miracles by Satanic power. Mark 3v28-30, Luke 2v34, John 15v20, Acts 28v22.

The Sadducees (Priests) were the liberal modernists of their day, they didn't believe in miracles or the resurrection, their desire was for political power and money, this is how they would influence the Jews and circumstances in Judea. The Herodians were a political party and the followers of King Herod (Herod The Great) and who wanted to restore a Herod to the throne in Judea as well as the other areas ruled by Herod the Great. They were political foes of the Pharisees who wished to restore the kingdom to David. All three of these sects, inspired and energised by the Devil, came together to murder the Lord Jesus.

On different occasions Our Lord warned the apostles to beware of the erroneous and destructive teachings (i.e. leaven) of the Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians. Matt 16v6,11, Mark 8v15.

The denominations today contain all three of these groups of people. By far the greatest numbers are those of the Scribes and Pharisees sect, who today are the fundamentalist evangelicals. They say God did miracles in the past through the prophets and apostles, but they (both gifts of the Spirit and the greater ministries) were withdrawn at the end of the apostolic times (even though the Scriptures and Church history show differently) and God will do miracles again in the future, at the resurrection, He just doesn't do them today, as none are being done through them. This contradictory attitude is so bizarre, because the spiritual gifts that they say no longer exist they are praying for every day!

Those who insist that spiritual gifts have ceased and are not for today, must, if they are to be consistent, insist that God has removed them all, and not just some of them. If they really believe that spiritual gifts are not for today, how is it that they pray for divine healing? For this is a gift of healing. How is it that they pray for illumination upon a problem, or guidance from God? For this is a word of wisdom. How is it that they pray for ministers of the Gospel to receive the Holy Spirit's anointing? And for Satan's power to be lifted off people? And for people to be blessed? For these are the operations of the gift of faith. How is it that they pray for material needs to be met? For this is the province of the working of miracles. How is it that they pray for a revelation of God to the soul? For this is a discerning of spirits. How is it that they pray for an inspired utterance from God to help others? For this is the realm of prophecy. How is it that they pray for the Holy Spirit to inspire them in prayer? And then reject the gift of tongues, which is the Divine answer to this request. It is a fact that Christians who say that spiritual gifts have ceased to operate in the Church, actually pray for their manifestation. Those who reject spiritual gifts completely, have in reality tried to remove God's influence from His Church, and put it in the hands of men. We must accept that God has decreed that we need these gifts, and not frustrate the wise and loving reasons for their manifestation. 1Cor 12v7-11.

The Devil again has put this evil seed into the Church, that God no longer does miracles and neither does He set the greater ministries in the Church as they are not needed because we have the canon of Scripture, which they pride themselves in. Those who believe this lie endeavour to try and support it by using 1Cor 13v10: "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away," trying to make "that which is perfect" refer to the Scripture canon, which is completely ludicrous. The canon of Scripture is not even mentioned in 1Cor 13, and nowhere in the New Testament is the canon of Scripture referred to as "perfect."

Indeed, the very Scriptures that they pride themselves in, witness against them to the fact that God still does miracles and sets apostles and prophets in the Church today, and has done so throughout the whole of the age of grace right up until the Lord's Second Coming. Acts 2v16-21,38,39, 1Cor 12v28, Eph 4v7-16, Rev 11v3-6.

The Sadducees (and Herodians) also are to be found in the Church today in the mainline denominations, the liberals who deny Christ's true humanity and deity, His resurrection, and rejection of the gifts of the Spirit and the greater ministries of the Church.

The Herodians are those in the Church who use political power to accomplish their plans and purposes.

Hence today, the mainline denominations, including the "so called" Pentecostals, like the Jews in Our Lord's day, have "a form ("morphosin") of godliness but denying its power."

The Devil has again managed to get the people of God believing that God no longer does miracles any more, that He is not the Great I AM, but the "great I WAS." The denominations need to ask themselves the same question that Gideon put to "The Angel of The Lord" (Who was the pre-incarnate Christ), "If the Lord is with us...where are all His miracles?" Judges 6v13.

There is only ONE way to bring God's Presence and power into any individual Christian or Church, and that is by turning to the Lord Jesus in an earnest way, thirsting after Him and seeking Him diligently by praying in tongues. Psalm 24v3-6, Isaiah 44v3,4, John 7v37-39, Rom 8v26-28, 1Cor 14v2,4,15,18, James 4v6-8, Jude v20,21. And then implement the government, practices and ministries that God has revealed in the Scriptures. Luke 22v24-29, John 13v1-17, Acts 2v40-47, 6v1-7, 1Cor 11v1-14v40 (esp. 12v28), Eph 4v7-16, 1Tim 3v1-13, Titus 1v5-9, James 5v13-18, 1Peter 5v1-11.

If Christians imitate the early Church, they will certainly get what the early Church got, and more, as the latter rains far exceed the early rains! God has NOT changed; He is still the "Great I AM." Exodus 3v14, Mal 3v6, John 6v20, 8v58, Heb 13v8.

It is an indisputable fact that Christians become like their spiritual leaders, if the leaders are content with the old wine and wineskins, the Christians who are under their care will become like them. Luke 5v37-39, 1Peter 1v18,19.

Part III

From 313 AD when Constantine supposedly became a Christian (although he murdered members of his family and continued in idolatry) and the publication of his Edict of Toleration (Milan), which heaped wealth, riches, position and (political) power upon the Church, the Church no longer trusted in God and His power, but in their wealth and political power, so that it lost God's presence, power and blessing that the early Church had enjoyed up until that terrible day.

John Wesley writes in his sermon "The More Excellent Way."

"It does not appear that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were common in the Church for more than two or three centuries. We seldom hear of them after the fatal period when the Emperor Constantine called himself a Christian; and, from a vain imagination of promoting the Christian cause thereby, heaped riches and power and honour upon the Christians in general, but in particular upon the Christian Clergy. From this time they almost totally ceased; very few instances of the kind were found. The cause of this was not, as has been vulgarly supposed, "Because there was no more occasion for them, because all the world had become Christians." This is a miserable mistake; not a twentieth part of it was then nominally Christian. The real cause was 'the love of many,' almost of all Christians, so called, was 'waxed cold.' The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ than the other Heathens; The Son of Man when He came to examine His Church, could hardly 'find faith upon the earth.' This was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian Church; because the Christians were turned Heathens again, and had only a dead form left."

He also said, "The Church lost as much as its spiritual power as it had gained in its wealth and influence."

From 313 AD until the present day the mainline denominations have been guilty of the terrible sin that the Jews were guilty of, and this is the charge that Stephen fired at the religious leaders of Israel just before they murdered him by stoning when he said: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." Acts 7v51 (Acts 6v8-7v60).

We need to make our religious structure the same as the pattern laid down in the New Testament Scriptures, even as Moses obeyed the command to follow the pattern shown to him on Mount Sinai exactly when making the Tabernacle. Acts 7v44.

It is also imperative to listen to the Voice of the Holy Spirit. Heb 12v25, Rev 2v7,11,17,29, 3v6,13,22.

"The great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues...which came out of the tribulation, the great one," do NOT come out of the present mainline denominations, i.e., old wineskins and old wine BUT out of a New Testament structure, i.e., new wineskins and new wine, the same government, practices, ministries as practised by the early Church. Acts 2v40-47, 1Cor 11v1-14v40, Eph 4v7-16.

Part IV

For fifteen hundred years, Israel (religious leaders and its people) had actively rebelled against God, killing his prophets and those He sent to warn them. This culminated with the murder of the Promised One, their Messiah, the Lord Jesus. 2Chron 36v5-21, (esp. 36v16), Matt 23v1-39, Luke 19v41-44, Acts 6v8-7v60 (esp. 7v51-60).

Likewise the Church, from 313 AD, when Constantine claimed he had become a Christian and issued the Edict of Toleration (Milan) heaping wealth, position and (political) power upon it, to the present day, its leaders and people of the denominations have actively resisted the Holy Spirit and kept the Trinity firmly shut out of His Church, which the Lord Jesus purchased with His own blood, by implementing (the inspiration of which was by the Devil) non Scriptural government, practices and ministries into the Church, designed by the Devil to firmly and completely shut and lock the Trinity out of THEIR Church. Acts 20v28, Rom 10v21.

The words of the Lord Jesus in Matt 23v37, "How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing," hold true against all the denominations of the Church from 313 AD to this day, and will do so right up until the Second Coming of Our Dear Lord Jesus.

When the last great outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurs, all over the world countless numbers will respond to His Voice through those who preach the Gospel with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven, so that "a great multitude which no man could number...will come out of the Tribulation, the Great One, and wash their robes in the Blood of the Lamb." Dan 11v32,33, John 10v16,27-30, Acts 2v16-21,38,39, 3v19-21, Heb 10v24,25,1Peter 1v10-12, Rev 7v8,9, 11v3-6, 12v1,6,14.

Part V

The wealth, property and prosperity that the denominations and Churches have amassed are an abomination to God. Luke 16v15 (Luke 16v1-31). This wealth has been obtained by taking it from the poor of God's people, even as the Temple in Jerusalem, which God had appointed to be the house of prayer for all nations, but had become a den of robbers. Mark 11v17. The spiritual leaders of these Churches, instead of being inspired and energised by the Holy Spirit, are inspired and energised by the Devil and the powers of darkness. Acts 3v6, 8v20, 20v33.

There is little or no presence of God in their services, and completely devoid of the power of God to deliver the sick, infirm, diseased and mentally ill people.

Part VI

The glorious Church of the last seven years of this age is not (as mentioned before) a product of the Orthodox, Reformed, roman Catholic or Pentecostal denominations, but a product of New Testament government, practices and ministries as seen and experienced by the early Church. Acts 2v16-21,38,39,40-47, 1Cor 11v1-14v40, Heb 10v24,25, Rev 6v9-11, 7,9,10,14, 11v3-6, 12v1,6,14, 20v4,5. Christians (generally) in the denominations will be totally unprepared for the Great Tribulation, being unable to stand due to the great evil that will be unleashed into the world when the Devil and his evil angels are cast out of the heavenlies into the earth and God's restraining hand is removed from them. Dan 12v1, Matt 24v12,15-22,45-25v13, 2Thess 2v1-12, Rev 12v7-12.

The great revival that is coming upon the Church will totally bypass the denominations due to their prayerlessness, worldly mindedness, and carnality; it will be a structure completely devoid of God's presence and power. Another

lack in the denominations is a complete ignorance of last day prophetic truth, which will lead to Christians in those Churches being spiritually totally unprepared for the Great Tribulation. Luke 6v46-49.

Because the denominations consist of visible structures (i.e., buildings), in the countries where there will be great persecution during the Great Tribulation, these structures and the Christians associated with them will be destroyed. The only structure robust enough to withstand the great evil and persecutions of the Great Tribulation will be that practised by the early Church, which proved its ability for three centuries to withstand times of persecution and have continual revival. The structure of the early Church that was practised by Christians in communist Russia was the only one that withstood the great persecution from the communist government of that country. Dan 7v25, Rev 12v4,5, 13v7.

Part VII

As the religious leaders of Israel and its people missed the first Coming of Christ (due to a strong nationalistic mindset and a completely wrong idea about the character of Christ, Isaiah 53v1-4), as they were looking for and (erroneously) expecting a coming in glory (i.e., the Second Coming), when the Christ would (supposedly) come and throw off the Roman yoke and restore the kingdom to Israel, so the denominations will miss the Second Coming of Christ due to a fear of suffering for the Truth and the fear of men. Matt 16v21-23, Acts 1v6, John 7v13. They will (generally) be looking for a secret advent and rapture of the Church before the Great Tribulation.

As the Devil put an evil seed into the minds of the apostles that the Messiah would not suffer death, so he has put an evil seed into the Church that Christians will not have to go through the Great Tribulation, as they say that the Great Tribulation is the wrath of God (which is isn't, but the wrath of Satan, because he knows that he has a short time left upon earth after being cast out of the heavenlies at the beginning of the Great Tribulation, Rev 12v7-12) and that God has delivered them from the wrath to come. 1Thess 5v9.

As the mindset of the Christians in the denominations is that they'll miss the Great Tribulation, there will have been absolutely no preparation by them to face the great evil coming into the world at the beginning of the Great Tribulation, so when it comes, and there is no advent and rapture, they will backslide and go into apostasy, thus losing their salvation. Matt 24v12,15-22,45-25v13, Luke 6v46-49.

Part VIII

A true revival produces a deep godly sorrow for sin and a deep repentance in the individual, this produces a real earnestness in the new convert to give all to the Lord Jesus and take up his cross and follow Him and bear much fruit. Whereas, conversion of an individual in an environment where the Gospel is preached without the Holy Spirit (as is generally the case in the denominations, and will be the case during the coming revival which will bypass the denominations), produces little or no godly sorrow, leading to a shallow repentance, that yields little or no fruit in the convert, who, over the decades, will not mature spiritually, and remain a "babe," Greek, "nepios" (literally "non speaking one"). Matt 16v24, Luke 8v11-15, 1Cor 3v1-8, 2Cor 7v10, Heb 5v12-6v2. When temptation and hard times come, the convert with a shallow work of grace in their heart, will backslide and go into apostasy, hence why Paul tells us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Luke 6v46-49, Phil 2v12. The last great revival of this age (the latter rains, Acts 2v16-21) will soon be upon us, and will come in two stages: The first stage will occur just before the last seven years of this age starts (Daniel's 70th prophetic week), when the Lord Jesus opens the 1st Seal, which then precipitates Vladimir Putin (who will be revealed as The Antichrist at the start of the Great Tribulation) making a peace treaty with many parties, including Israel, for the last seven years of this age. Dan 9v27, Matt 24v15, 2Thess 2v1-4, Rev 6v1,2

The Holy Spirit will bypass the denominational churches, as they are not prepared for revival, and He will fall upon and fill those small groups and individual Christians who have been earnestly seeking Him in prolonged prayer, even as the disciples did in the Upper Room before (and after) the Day of Pentecost. Psalm 24v3-6, Acts 24v46-49, Acts 1v1-8,14, 2v42, 4v24-31, 12v5, 1Cor 14v15,18, 1Thess 5v16,17. This first outpouring of the Holy Spirit (the latter rains) will bring about a deep conviction of sin in the individual bringing about a deep work of grace in the new convert. During the first and second half of Daniel's 70th prophetic week, the Trinity will bring about the greatest revival that has ever occurred upon earth. The first three and a half years will get the Church ready for the Great Tribulation, before which the second wave of the latter rains will occur, which will bring a new authority and power into the Church, that of judgement and discipline of the wicked (both humans and angels) at the will of the believer (the greater ministries of the Church) and individual groups of believers (Churches), and the ability to strike the earth with every plague as often as the individual desires, even as the Two Witnesses will do for three and a half years in and around Jerusalem. This second wave of revival will also bring a multitude of believers into the Church, which no man will be able to number. Dan 11v32,33, Zech 12v8, Matt 18v18-20, Rev 7v9,10,14, 11v3-6, 12v1,6,14. God will keep, guard, protect and provide for a great multitude, which no man can number, during the Great Tribulation, even as He did with Israel for forty years in the Wilderness. Neh 9v21, Rev 7v9,10,14, 12v6,14.

The second wave of the last great revival of this age will coincide with the beginning of the last world war of this present age, that will continue right up until the Second Coming of Christ immediately after the Great Tribulation of those days, Who will destroy the wicked and to bring His people home and set up the Millennium Kingdom upon earth. Dan 11v29,30, Matt 24v29-31, Acts 2v16-21,38,39, 2Thess 1v5-10, 2v8-12, Rev 11v15-19.

Part IX

Many Christians around the world in the denominational churches, especially those who are in the countries controlled by Antichrist during the Great Tribulation, because of believing erroneous doctrine on the Second Coming (and so not being prepared for the Great Tribulation) will (when the Lord Jesus does not return, as they believe, just before the Great Tribulation) backslide and go into apostasy. Many Christians will even believe that Antichrist is the Christ due to him sitting in the Temple in Jerusalem claiming that he is God and the great lying signs, wonders and miracles that the False Prophet does to support his false claims, that Antichrist is God. Mal 3v1, Matt 24v11,23,24, 2Thess 2v1-12, Rev 13v1-18.

At the beginning of the Great Tribulation, the False Prophet will (falsely) claim that the Millennium has started and that it is the time when he "shalt break them with a rod of iron, and shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel," and that God has set his king upon His holy hill of Zion, that it is a rule of stern justice. Two thirds of the Jews will follow Antichrist, accepting him as their promised Messiah, and many Christians will believe the lie and accept him as their Christ. Psalm 2v6,9, Zech 13v8, Matt 24v24, 2Cor 11v14.

Part X

It is a great calamity that the vast majority of Christians in the Anglican, Orthodox, Reformed, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic and Independent Churches are in a comatose state regarding the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. Matt 24v4,23-25,Mark 3v5, Luke 21v8, 2Thess 2v1-3,9-12, 2Tim 3v1-5 (esp. v6). The ignorance of these Christians within the denominations is very great and their knowledge about this critical event varies from the bare minimum to nil. This terrible state of affairs will continue (and indeed worsen), and when the last great revival of this age occurs, it will bypass the vast majority of these churches because of their refusal to seek Him. A small number of Christians in the denominations will respond to it and will be happy to listen to Christians outside of their denominations who have light from the last day prophetic Scriptures and are looking for His Second Coming, so as to get ready for the Great Tribulation and the dark evil days that are just around the corner.

As with Israel of old, only a tenth of believers in the denominations will respond to His urgent pleas to draw near to Him in earnest prayer. Psalm 24v3-6, Isaiah 6v13, Matt 24v7,8, Luke 21v11, James 4v7,8, 1Peter 5v6,7.

It Matt 24v45-25v13 we see the evil steward and foolish virgins as representing comatose pastors/ teachers and Christians in the denominational churches.

Part XI

During the Great Tribulation the Devil, energising his evil servants, Antichrist and the False Prophet, will set up a mock Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, a Devilish parody of God's Millennial Kingdom, and will mimic God's plan for the Temple in Jerusalem during the Age of Law, when His purpose for it was to be a house of prayer for all nations, where all peoples of the earth could come for healing of sicknesses and diseases, getting their burdens lifted, being blessed and their needs met. Isaiah 35v5,6, Mark 11v17.

During the Great Tribulation the False Prophet, in the presence of Antichrist, will by evil power do great lying signs, wonders and miracles by satanic power. This Satanic power will be used in many different ways, one of them being that people will come to the Temple and receive healing for their sicknesses and diseases, and get their needs met by this evil power. The cost to the individual partaking of satanic power for such a purpose will be having to worship the Devil, Antichrist and his image. By this they will then receive the mark of the Beast, which will enable them to buy and sell in the countries under the control of Antichrist, and ultimately ensuring their eternal damnation in the lake of fire. Dan 8v24, Matt 24v24, 2Thess 2v9, Rev 13v12-17, 14v9-11.

Many Christians in the denominational churches in the countries under the control of Antichrist, because of their great dearth of last day prophetic truth and prayerlessness, will listen to their spiritual leaders, who share their same spiritual deadness, and at the beginning of the Great Tribulation seeing the happenings in Jerusalem and being so awe struck by them, will accept Antichrist as the Christ, and backslide and go into apostasy, with them even making pilgrimages to the Temple in Jerusalem to worship him, thus ensuring that they go into the lake of fire at the Lord's Second Coming. Matt 24v45-25v13.

Conclusion

The great burden upon the Trinity's Heart at this present critical time is that every individual Christian should earnestly seek Him in a new and living way, and if not already, get baptised in the Holy Spirit and diligently exercise the gift of tongues building themselves up in their most holy faith, to get ready for the great evil that is not far off. Psalm 24v3-6, Luke 21v36, Rom 8v26-28, 13v11-14, 1Cor 14v2,4,15,18, 2Peter 3v12, Jude v20,21.

Appendix V: The New Testament Ministries, Their Gifts And Work. Eph 4v11

In 1Cor 12v18,28, we read that God has "set" the members in the body according to His will and plan, "kathos ethelesen." "Set" is "etheto," the aorist indicative middle of "tithemi," the middle voice indicates that God did it for His own use, and "kathos ethelesen," for His own will, plans and purposes. In 1Cor 12v28, Paul again uses the aorist indicative middle "etheto," to emphasise that God has "set" the ministries in the body for His purposes. It is, therefore, essential for the Church members and ministries to find out what God desires them to do, and not just try to fulfil their own plans. Theologians who state that God no longer places miraculous ministries in the Church, resist God's will, and refuse to accept His Divine appointments, and persecute His ministries. The Divine "Woe," is upon them. Luke 11v46-52, Rom 9v20.

We will limit our discussion to the ministry gifts mentioned both in 1Cor 12v28 and Eph4v11, that is, apostles, prophets, teachers who are pastors as well, and evangelists. We must remember that people with the same ministry gift can vary very considerably in their spiritual authority and power. Gal 2v6-9, 2Cor 11v5, 12v11. A Christian can have a prophetic or teaching ministry that is only for the local church, whereas others, like Barnabus, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen and Saul, Acts 13v1, had such great ministries that they were called of God to establish infant churches in the faith. In the same way an evangelist may have such a great and conspicuous ministry that he travels outside of his local area, at the direction of God, to evangelise and establish churches. We also need to note that all the higher ministries possess, in greater or less measure, the lower ministries, indeed, one could not be an apostle unless they had some prophetic, teaching and evangelistic gift above the normal standard expected in a local ministry.

In Acts 13v1-4, we see Paul and Barnabus, both of whom had prophetic and teaching ministries, given an apostolic mission after their tender and faithful oversight of the infant church at Antioch and other places. Unless the local church gives pride of place to developing prophetic ministries, it will never see genuine New Testament apostolic ministry. The local church, not a theological institute, good as some of these may be, is God's supreme choice for the development of His ministry gifts, and this development can only take place where there is a genuine New Testament body ministry. This is why Paul urged Christians to seek after prophecy and the revelation gifts and to act as a complete body. 1Cor 12v1 to 14v40.

A) "Firstly Apostles."

We read in 1Cor 12v28, that apostles are "placed, appointed, and set in the Church by God," and as long as the Church exists God will exercise His prerogative. Apostles, like all the other ministries, are permanently set in the Church, "en tei ecclesia," by God during this age. It is only rank unbelief and a resistance to God's Word and Spirit that makes Christians say that God has amended this Scripture, and now only appoints non-miraculous ministries. God looks upon apostolic ministry as the most important ministry of the Church. Who are we to resist His will?

In the New Testament we see the chief apostle, our Lord Jesus Christ, Heb 1v2; then there are the twelve apostles who had a unique position, and were chosen by Christ after a night of prayer. Mark 3v13-19, Luke 6v12-16, Matt 10v1-5, Acts 1v13,26. After the apostasy of Judas, the remaining eleven apostles taught others their hallowed memories of Christ's life, glory, and His public and private teaching, they also enjoyed additional special revelation and outstanding personal spiritual experiences. See Acts 1v1-4, for Christ's 40 days of ministry to them after His resurrection. It is interesting to note how many brothers were in the twelve, Simon Peter and his brother Andrew; James and his brother John; Philip seems to have been Bartholomew's brother, otherwise known as Nathanael, Luke 6v14 with John 1v43-51; James the son of Alphaeus could have been the brother of Matthew as well as the brother of Judas, not Iscariot. Tradition says that James the son of Alphaeus was brother to Matthew, Simon Zealotes, and Judas, not Iscariot. Lk.6v16. Families, who have learned to live together and love one another, can be really used by God; they are a strong unit for God, if they keep close to Him.

There are other apostles besides the original twelve mentioned in the New Testament, Matthias, Acts 1v26; Paul and Barnabus, 1Cor 9v5,6, Acts 14v4,14, Gal 2v9; Apollos, 1Cor 4v6-9; Timothy and Silas, 1Thess 1v1, 2v6. "Messengers" in Greek can sometimes mean "apostles," Epaphroditus and Titus could have been apostles, the word for "messenger" in Phil.2v23. is "apostolos," and "messengers" in 2Cor 8v23 is "apostoloi," it could mean that Titus and Epaphroditus were "sent-ones" of the churches as distinct from the "sent-ones" of God, but they could have been apostles for God as well as men. James the Lord's half brother, also became an apostle. Gal 1v19, 2v6, James

1v1. It is also possible that Andronicus and Junia were apostles, they had been Christians before Paul, and had suffered imprisonment with him it seems from the words "fellow-prisoners." Rom 16v7. "Of note among the apostles" could mean "highly esteemed among the apostles," but it probably more likely that they were "distinguished among the apostles," or literally, "stamped, marked, bearing a mark, among the apostles." They had by their suffering for Christ certainly fulfilled an essential qualification for apostleship. 1Cor 4v9-13. If Junia was an apostle, it could mean that there was one woman apostle. Church leaders of the first few centuries have written that Junia was a woman, and that she was also an apostle. Leaving all conjecture aside, we see around 20 apostles in the New Testament Scriptures.

"Apostle" was used by the Greeks to speak of any responsible person "sent" by someone who did a job for them. There were throughout the Middle East thousands of people called "apostles" in the business and political world, who were sent to do work for their master or ruler. "Apostle" means literally "one sent forth," from "apo" meaning "from," and "stello" meaning "to send." Apostles in the Church are, and were, the messengers, workers and "sent-ones" of God, with "a mission," "apostolee," from God. Acts 1v25, Rom 1v5, 1Cor 9v2, Gal 2v8. The ministries of prophet, teacher and evangelist may be "sent" on a mission by God, as were the ministries of Acts 13v1, and Agabus and Philip, but this does not mean that they had the ministry or authority of apostles. Apostles were Christians who were sent by God with His full-delegated authority, and fully equipped by God to found and care for churches. The New Testament shows the ministry of apostles consisted of the following qualities and gifts.

1) "The most eminent Apostles" had great spiritual power and spiritual revelation from Christ. 2Cor 11v5, 12v11.

A miraculous ministry was an essential part of apostolic ministry, whether a person was a major or minor apostle. Apostles had a heavenly power and commission that manifested itself in miracles, it was not a formal title, it was a ministry and commission from Christ. Gal 1v1, 2Cor 12v12, 1Cor 9v1,2, Col 1v11. The miracles that God performed through apostles gave them great ability to win converts and found churches. The "chiefest apostles" also had a great prophetic revelation from God, and it seems that it was this difference in degree of revelation ministry that made the difference between major and minor apostles. 1Cor 9v1,2, 2Cor 11v5, 12v11,12. It is only those who have had this kind of tremendous revelation of God, and from God, who can stand true in the malicious persecution that comes against those who have a truly apostolic ministry. Apostles had Christ's truth and mighty gifts and keys of authority to open doors of blessing and healing, but it was all because of God's grace. Matt 16v19, 18v18,19, John 20v23. Jesus alone has the keys to eternal life, or death. Rev 1v18, Rev 3v7, Isaiah 22v22.

2) Apostles had a God-given ability to pastor churches.

What the young apostles of Christ lacked in age they received through contact with their Lord, and through His gifts. They later exercised a pastoral care of the flock, as we see from Christ's instructions to Peter. John 21v15-17. Once a church was founded the work of an apostle was pastoral, so apostles needed great fruits of character and a real love for their converts. They had to be spiritual fathers to the flock, not just teachers; Paul said that the Corinthians had many teachers, but not many fathers. 1Cor 4v15. Paul speaks of "all patience," and "much patience." 2Cor 6v4, 12v12. Great power demands great grace, and the need for tenderness towards God's babes. Acts 4v33, Gal 4v19, 1Cor 9v1. We see from 1Thess 2v5-13, the tender feelings that Paul and his associates had towards their converts, it is an example that every ministry should imitate. There was no flattery, covetousness, or self-seeking, by Paul and his companions; they were gentle and affectionate to their converts. The whole aim of the apostolic ministries was to bring people into living contact with God, and to establish Christian fellowships that were dominated by "agape" love. Paul totally rejected any thought of glorifying himself, or of increasing his sphere of influence, or of establishing a personal kingdom or denomination. He recognised that apostolic ministry demanded a tender love for people, and a willingness to give his all for the welfare and blessing of people, just as his Lord had done. 1Thess 2v8.

3) Apostles were responsible for the foundation of Christian doctrine.

Apostles laid the necessary foundation of faith, we read in Acts 2v42, that the converts at Jerusalem "continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine." Eph 3v5. God fully equipped His Church with the doctrine for this age, at the start of this age, so no one can now lay claim to new doctrine outside of the Scriptures. Anyone who does so charges God with folly, because they suggest that God allowed His Church to carry on without vital truth for nearly 2,000 years. The Scriptures are the only foundation for doctrine and practice; any claim to vital new revelation on doctrine should be treated as heretical. New doctrinal revelation is not given today, even to people with a genuine apostolic ministry. Eph 2v20, 3v5, Rev 22v18,19, Acts 15v28, 1Cor 2v13, 1Thess 4v15, 1John 5v9-13. We can receive personal guidance from God, but not new doctrinal revelation.

The apostles were inspired in their doctrine, because they received it directly from Jesus, but they were not infallible in other things. Peter denied his Lord, and on another occasion had to be corrected by Paul. Luke 22v54-62, Gal

2v6,11-14, Acts 14v15. From Acts 17v10-12, we see that the Bereans carefully examined Paul's apostolic teaching in the light of the Scriptures, and they were said to be "noble-minded" because of this. These sincere people believed Paul's teaching, when they found that it was foreshadowed in the Old Testament, and was wholly in agreement with God's previous revelations to His children. 1Thess 5v21, 1John 4v1-5, Heb 8v5, 10v1. The vague shadows of the Old Testament were illuminated by divine revelation. Eph 3v1-11. The apostles taught eternal Old Testament moral truth with the new Christian truth, this truth was passed on to other Christians with a teaching ministry. We see Timothy teaching local elders in 2Tim 2v2. Paul had valuable helpers who were able to assist him in the foundation and care of churches. Acts 17v10-15, Col 4v7. etc.

4) Apostles had a God-given ability to develop spiritual ministry in their converts.

Apostles experienced in some measure certain aspects of prophetic ministry, particularly in the impartation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to Christians. Paul wanted to visit the Roman church in order to share and impart some "spiritual grace-gift," "charisma pneumatikon," to them. Rom 1v10,11. The first essential was to get the converts baptised in the Holy Spirit and manifesting spiritual gifts, so that they could edify themselves and minister Christ's power and love to others. Acts 1v4-8, 2v4, 8v15-18, 9v17, 10v44-48, 19v1-6. Paul did not just give intellectual teaching on doctrine, essential as this is, he brought his converts into a living experience of God, His gifts, and His truth. Paul, like Moses of old, had the power and authority to impart spiritual gifts and spiritual ministry. Deut 34v9.

We see from Col 2v1-5, that Paul watched over the condition of churches by the revelation gifts of the Holy Spirit, and exercised the gift of faith in prayer to transform the lives of Christians he had never met in the flesh. Gal 4v19. In Cor 5v1-5, we see that Paul was present in spirit in the Corinthian Church, when the man who had committed incest with his father's wife was being disciplined, and he exercised spiritual power in that discipline. We need to remember that Paul did not only rely upon spiritual revelation for knowledge about the churches under his care, he also wrote letters, and relied on the reports of others about the spiritual progress of his converts.

5) Apostles were responsible for appointing elders in the churches they founded.

The New Testament states that Paul ordained elders in all the churches that he founded, and instructed Titus and Timothy to do the same and told them the qualifications that an elder must have. Titus 1v5-10, 1Tim 3v1-7, Acts 14v23. However, their choice was not autocratic or arbitrary, they chose those who the local Christians had confidence in. The popular will of the local Christians was prayerfully considered, for they knew which leaders were trustworthy, godly, wise and spiritual, and to whom the Holy Spirit had given a definite ministry. The advice and agreement of the local people was sought, and they nominated those who had the necessary qualifications of character and spirituality to perform this ministry.

The local church, then, had an important say in the ordination of both elders and deacons. Acts 1v25,26, 6v2-6, 14v23. Elders were chosen by the popular vote, and ordained by elders as well as apostles, in the will of the Holy Spirit. Acts 20v28, 14v23, 1Tim 3v2-13, 4v14. In Acts 14v23., "appointed," is "cheirotoneo," the aorist active participle of "cheirotoneo" from "cheirotonos," which means "extending the hand," it is derived from "cheir," "hand," and "teino," "to stretch." It means "to vote and elect by a show of hands," and as in 2Cor 8v18,19, to appoint with the approval of an assembly of people. Ellicott says of Acts 14v23: "The word for ordained occurs in the New Testament here and in 2Cor 8v19, where it is translated 'chosen' and certainly seems to imply popular election (election by a show of hands), which is, indeed, the natural meaning of the word." Quote ends. The seven deacons of Acts 6v1-6, were first selected by the Jerusalem church, and then chosen, "eklego, and appointed, "kathistemi," by the apostles, this was almost certainly what Paul did in Acts 14v23., and what he advised Titus to do in Titus 1v5.

Paul appointed the elders of local churches in the churches that he had founded; modern prelates, who have never founded a church and never manifested spiritual gifts, cannot claim the right to ordain elders, never mind the exclusive right of apostolic succession. There is no such thing as humanly ordained apostolic succession, it is only a miraculous ministry of the most conspicuous kind that proves a person has apostolic ministry. From Acts 13v1-4, we see that the leaders of the church at Antioch gave themselves to prayer and fasting for guidance in their work for God, and when God revealed His will for Paul and Barnabus, they earnestly prayed for their ministries, and sent them on their divinely appointed work. In like manner, Paul and the local church, not only appointed spiritual and godly men; they prayed earnestly for them, that God might impart further blessing and ministry to them. 1Tim 4v14, 5v22, Acts 6v6, 13v1-3, 14v23, 2Tim 1v6.

NB1: The time lapse before elders were appointed by apostles.

We see from Acts 14v23, and the instructions to Timothy and Titus, that there was a definite time lapse between a church being founded and ministries being appointed in that church. Time was given for ministry in the local church to develop, there was no premature ordination and so mistakes were cut out.

In Acts 13v1-3 we see the Christians at Antioch were guided by prophets and teachers from outside for about three years before their own local ministries had developed enough for God to send Paul and Barnabas on their way to other work. From Acts 14v23, we see that Paul ordained elders within about two years of churches being founded. It appears that up to this time the Christians had gathered together for Bible study, prayer, the Lord's supper and fellowship, and the baptism of new converts, without any formally appointed elders or deacons. Christ Himself made leaders in these churches by giving His ministry gifts to some of them, and when these divinely given ministries manifested themselves, they were accepted and recognised by the people, and then appointed by Paul. Ministries were proved before they were appointed. 1Tim 3v10. God Himself sets ministries in the Church, men's ordination does not mean a thing if God is not in it, the churches should recognise those who God has ordained and given a ministry gift. Acts 20v28.

NB2: Apostles were not despotic; they exercised the superintendence of love.

A prolonged apostolic mission in a city did not hinder the body ministry of the local church, or the development of ministries, it encouraged both. Paul did not stay in a place to be the permanent pastor of the flock, he always appointed local elders to guide and care for the local church. Paul followed our Lord's direction in Matt 20v25-28, and never "lorded it over" or dictated to the local Christians. He had the humility to look upon himself as, "the least of the apostles," and "less than the least of all saints," and even as "the chief of sinners," and this genuine humility won people's hearts to him, and accomplished far more than autocratic, bombastic claims could ever have done. 1Cor 15v9, Eph 3v8, 1Tim 1v15.

Paul founded and established churches and moved on, and then returned to confirm and give spiritual guidance and oversight to the churches, but he never took over the rule of the local church from the local elders. Paul stayed in Ephesus almost 3 years, and at Corinth for about 18 months to evangelise these strategic areas, not just to pastor the flocks formed by his evangelism. At Ephesus he had a mission in the hall of Tyrannus to reach all the district. Acts 19v8,9. This was the place for Paul's daily evangelism, and seekers came to him there. The Codex Beza adds "from the fifth hour to the tenth," that is, from just before midday and the noon meal to the close of the afternoon. What a Challenge! Paul had at least five hours evangelism a day in a public building or lecture hall. Paul needed quite a time to fully evangelise these strategic areas of evangelism, with their constant change of population. The local Christians would doubtless gather to listen to Paul's superlative theological discussions, and they would learn much from them. However, Christian fellowship and body ministry could not take place in a public meeting place for evangelism, so the Christians gathered in homes like that of Priscilla and Aquila. 1Cor 16v19, Acts 18v26. The Christian fellowship had plenty of scope at night, and Paul would do his very best to inspire body ministry and develop spiritual ministries, he was not in agreement with one-man ministry in Christian fellowship groups. 1Cor 12, etc. One-man ministry in a local church is wrong, even if, like the apostle Paul, a man has all the ministry gifts; body ministry is God's way for developing spiritual ministries and healthy Christians.

The elders were local men, the apostles itinerant men.

Through their itinerant ministries the apostles cemented fellowship between the churches, but they did not constitute either central government, or even an organisational fellowship of churches. Apostles, prophets and elders had the work of overseeing the flock of God, but they were not to dominate it, their work was the superintendence of love. Apostles were not to lord it over God's Church, "all ye are brethren and one is your Master, even Christ." Matt 23v8,10. Indeed, they were to humble themselves as little children, otherwise they would not even enter the kingdom of God. Matt 18v3. They were to be the servants of God's people, not their lords. Matt 20v20-28, John 13v4-17. They were not to be put upon a pedestal and called Rabbi. Matt 23v1-8. The aim of these ministries was to bring people into a living experience of God and develop ministries among them; they helped God's babes to grow into mature Christians. They showed the same grace to young Christians in developing their ministries, as God had shown to them in developing their ministries.

After Paul had appointed the first elders in a local church, it was the responsibility of the local church and local elders to appoint other elders, as it became necessary or desirable. As long as a person had the necessary qualifications, they could be an elder; there is no restriction as to numbers in the New Testament. It is only when men follow worldly principles of government and one-man ministry that a plurality of elders becomes inconvenient, in spiritual oversight a plurality is a blessing not a hindrance. Prov 11v14, 24v6.

If a person has an apostolic ministry they manifest signs, wonders and miracles, and are also able to found, establish and care for churches. The office is proved by results, not by hollow claims. Paul had to refute the false claims of false apostles ("pseudapostoloi") in his day. 1Cor 11v13. Paul also speaks not only of the power, gifts and revelations, but also the sufferings and persecutions that are the essential characteristics of true apostolic ministry. 2Cor 11v1 to 12v21, 1Cor 9v1-27. Christians need to pray continually that God will raise up truly apostolic ministries in these dark days, so that the fullness of Christ's ministry can shine out to the world. Matt 9v35-38.

B) "Secondarily Prophets." 1Cor 12v28.

A prophetic ministry is distinct from a ministry of preaching or teaching, even though prophets may exhort, preach and teach, as did Judas and Silas, both of whom were prophets. Acts 15v32. Prophetic ministries are also not to be confused with Christians who possess the simple gift of prophecy, which is for edification, exhortation and comfort. 1Cor 14v3. A prophetic ministry possesses not only the simple gift of prophecy, but also a continual manifestation of gifts of revelation from God. A Christian in a local church may have the simple gift of prophecy and occasional manifestations of gifts of revelation, but it does not mean that they have a prophetic ministry. This difference in gifting will become clear as we consider the essentials of prophetic ministry.

Under the New Covenant there was a significant change in the function of prophetic ministry. The Old Testament prophet and priest came between the people and God, but in the New Testament all children of God can have personal guidance direct from their heavenly Father. Rom 8v14-17, Heb 8v13. We have the right, and duty, to reject any "guidance" from another person about which God has not personally told us. Prophets may be, and are, used by God to confirm guidance, but never to guide us against our own revelations from the Lord.

1) A New Testament prophet can warn of dangers and needs ahead.

A person with a prophetic ministry may predict major events in the world, or future events in the Church, as Agabus did in the case of the famine, and of Paul's imprisonment. Acts 11v27-30, 21v4,10-14. However, as we have said, prophets in the New Testament are not intended to give direction to order, Christians are intended to seek God for themselves.

The Scriptures reveal that prophets were sent by God to warn of divine judgement, or natural catastrophe. Gen 6v18-22, 18v17-33, 19v12,13, 41v1-44, 2Kings 4v8-17 with 8v1-6, Acts 17v9-11,21-25, 30v34,44. God can warn of war and persecution. 1Sam 23v9-12, 25v5,6, 2Kings 3v4-27, 6v8-12, Matt 16v21-24, Luke 22v31-34,54-62. A prophet can reveal spies and traitors in God's flock, 1Kings 14v5,6, John 6v70,71, and the evil thoughts and plans in the minds of opponents before they are spoken. Luke 14v1-6, Mark 2v5-8, Luke 5v22, Matt 22v15-22. God reveals people's hearts and exposes a hypocritical veneer. 1Sam 16v6,7.

2) Prophetic ministry can keep God's Church clean and in victory.

By the revelation of sin in the churches. Acts 5v1-12, 2Kings 5v20-27, Joshua 7v1-26. The apostle John had the spiritual condition of the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia revealed to him, the bad as well as the good. Rev 2 and 3. The New Testament apostles on occasions had judgement ministries similar to the Old Testament prophets; they had the authority to discipline by God's power. This is a rare but real New Testament occurrence. Matt 16v18,19, 18v15-19, John 20v21-23, Luke 10v19, Acts 5v1-11, 13v6-12, 1Tim 1v20, 1Cor 5v1-5.

By the restoration of the wounded and spiritually sick. Jesus desires restoration, not judgement, and prophetic ministry can reveal those with deep spiritual needs and meet their needs by divine power and grace. Gal 6v1,2, Phil.2v1,2, Heb 12v12-29.

3) Prophetic ministry can greatly help and comfort people, and inspire them trust God.

Prophetic ministry can inspire discouraged people. Christ came to heal the crushed and broken in heart, the revelation of the secrets of people's hearts can inspire them to seek and trust God. John 1v48,49, Luke 13v12-16, Isaiah 61v1-3, Luke 4v18,19.

God can expose the unconverted sinner's heart and bring them to Himself. 1Cor 14v24,25, 2Sam 12v1-9, John 1v40-51, 4v16-19,29. The very day I wrote this I saw a person amazed and challenged through the secrets of her heart being revealed, and she found Christ as her Saviour as a result. Prophetic ministry of this kind has a mighty evangelistic ministry, as we clearly see in John 4, from our Lord's conversation with the woman at the well. Also see Acts 9v10-18 and 10v48. etc.

4) Prophetic ministry can reveal God's strategic plans and confirm God's call.

A prophetic revelation from God guided Paul and his party to evangelise Macedonia, with great results. Acts 16v1-15. The Church needs to know God's strategic plans. Acts 8v26,29, 10v1-48, 13v2, 2v5, 4v4. Samuel confirmed his prophecy of God's call to Saul through many words of knowledge about future events. 1Sam 9v19, 10v1-16. Paul's conversion and call to God's work was confirmed by Ananias, who told Paul of his experience on the Damascus Road, and also ministered divine healing to him. Acts 9v17-25, 13v2.

5) Prophetic ministry is not limited by time or space in its ministrations.

Since the Holy Spirit is not limited by time or space, His ministrations to us, and through us, are not limited either. We can have the revelation of things to come, and minister to God's people at distance by His mighty power. Col 2v5, Gal 4v19. The Holy Spirit can take us through the time barrier to behold and live in the past, as He did with Moses to see the creation being made, and possibly with Ezekiel to see the sins which brought about the captivity, or see far distant events in the future as He did with Daniel and other prophets. Gen 1v1 to 2v25, Ezek 8v1-3, Dan 7all, Isaiah 53 all, Rev all. The gift of faith can enable prophets to minister the powers of the age to come to needy people whether they are present or absent. All Christians can expect this to take place, but it occurs more regularly and at a greater level of authority with prophetic ministry.

6) Prophetic ministry is intended to develop spiritual ministry in Christians.

Prophetic ministry has an important place in the local church in the development of spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries. It is very sad to see the majority of Christians without spiritual gifts or spiritual ministry, because prophetic ministries have been absent, despised, stifled and opposed. Prophets have a delegated authority and power, and can be the channel of God in the impartation of spiritual gifts, even as Moses was to Joshua, Deut.34v9.; and Elijah to Elisha. 1Kings 19v16,19-21, 2Kings 2v9-14. NB v9. "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you." Jesus imparted spiritual gifts to His apostles and the 70, Luke 9v1,2, 10v1-9, Paul ministered spiritual gifts to the Ephesians and Romans, Acts 19v1-6, Rom 1v10,11, and Paul and the elders to Timothy. 2Tim 1v6, 1Tim 4v14. Prophets, like apostles, have the responsibility to develop spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries, but they usually do not have a commission to found churches like apostles, unless like Silas, they are sent on an apostolic mission, then they become apostles, Silas was both a prophet and an apostle. Paul was a teacher with a prophetic voice, who became an apostle. Acts 15v32, 13v1-4.

Few will be led into a manifestation of the greater gifts, and spiritual ministry through formal ministry and formal meetings. Christians cannot be led into a deep spiritual experience of God and His gifts merely by preaching doctrine, you have to have to spend considerable time with them in prayer and ministry. A pulpit can be a means of real self-deception, it is not pretty sermons but spiritual power ministered in love that counts with God. It is only as we minister directly with needy people that the depth of our ministry is revealed. A pulpit ministry that never directly ministers to people's needs, is an unscriptural delusion. Love came down from heaven to minister even to death, and we should come down from our pulpits to minister and care. Where possible, every sermon should be followed by informal ministry to those in need. Christ's love can never be ministered at a safe distance. True prophetic ministry requires real prayer, caring love and sacrifice, and perhaps the demands and exacting qualifications for this ministry are one reason why there is a lack of prophets in the Church.

The Relation Between the Growth of a Christians Spirit to Spiritual and Prophetic Ministry.

NB: Both John And Jesus "Waxed Strong In Spirit." Luke 1v80, 2v40.

As Christians our spirits can, and should grow, and give us not only a greater appreciation of spiritual things, but also a greater ability to minister spiritual life to others. The Majority Text uses the identical Greek words to state that John Baptist and Jesus and not only grew physically strong, but spiritually strong as well as God prepared them for their ministries. We read in Luke 1v80, of John Baptist, "the child grew and waxed strong in spirit," this strong growth continued during his years in the wilderness. And in the Majority Text of Luke 2v40, we read that Jesus, "grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." God the Father educated our Lord for thirty years at Nazareth, to prepare Him for His ministry. Isaiah 49v1-3, 50v3-7. "Waxed strong," is "ekrataiouto," the imperfect passive of "krataioo," (NT:2901), to strengthen, to make strong, the passive means to be strengthened, to grow strong, to be made strong. The Father and Holy Spirit made Jesus strong for ministry. "krataioo," only occurs in Luke 1v80, 2v40, 1Cor 16v13 and Eph 3v16.

The words "in spirit," in Luke 2v40, are omitted from most modern translations, the Jamieson, Fausett and Brown commentary states that they are left out without sufficient reason and evidence. "In spirit" is "pneumati," it is omitted from Aleph and B from the fourth century, D and W from the fifth century, L from the eighth century, N from the sixth century; some Latin manuscripts, p eighth century, and C twelfth century; the Coptic (Egyptian) versions, third and fourth centuries; the Sinaitic Syriac, fourth century; and Origen, who died 254.

However, the evidence that "en pneumati" is in the original texts is extremely strong, for it is found in all the remaining uncials including, A, Theta, Psi, 053, etc; every known cursive copy and the massive Byzantine evidence includes it; so do the f1 and f13 codex compilation of important manuscripts by Kirsop Lake; all the Lectionaries; some Latin manuscripts (aur, f, q), Aureus 7th century (aur), the Brixianus 6th century (p), the Monacensis 7th century (q); the Syriac Peshitto, second century; the Syriac Harklean, the seventh century; and the Gothic version, from the fourth century. Many early Church fathers quote or discuss "pneumati" and accept it as correct; Leontius of

Cyprus, 6th century; Theodoret, died 466; Epiphanius, died 403; Cyril of Alexandria, died 444; Theodore of Mopsuestia, died 428; and others.

Dean John W Burgon, states in his book, "The Causes of Corruption of the New Testament Text: (In unholy hands on the Bible page B-95,96.) that "en pneumatī," "in spirit," was deliberately removed from Luke 2v40. in some manuscripts by orthodox Christians, because they feared that those who denied our Lord's deity would use this text to say, "How could Jesus be perfect God, if it says that His spirit waxed strong." Burgon records that Epiphanius states (2:36) that some of the orthodox, out of jealousy for our Lord's divinity, eliminated from Luke 19v41 the record that the Saviour wept.

Burgon goes on, "Codexes B Aleph D may be regarded as specimens of Codexes which have been once and again passed through the hands of such a corrector. S. Luke.2v40. records concerning the infant Saviour, that 'the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit.' By repeating the same expression, which already had been applied to the childhood of John the Baptist (1:80), it was clearly the design of the Author of Scripture to teach that the Word 'made flesh' submitted to the same laws of growth as every other man. The body grew; the spiritual part waxed strong. The consequence might have been foreseen. Certain of the orthodox were ill advised enough to erase the word 'pneumatī' (spirit) from the copies of Luke 2v40. And, lo, at the end of 1500 years four 'corrected' copies, two versions, one Greek father, survive to witness to this ancient fraud. And because it is Aleph, B,D,L, Origen, and the Latin, the Egyptian, and the Lewis versions, which are without the word 'pneumatī,' Lachmann, Tregelles, Tischendorf, and the revisers jump to the conclusion that it is a spurious accretion to the Text. They ought to reverse the proceeding, and to recognise in the evidence that this is one more indication of the untrustworthiness of certain witnesses. How can it be supposed that this word 'pneumatī' ever obtained its footing in the Gospel? We are assured by them that it was imported from St. Luke 1v80. We answer, How does the phrase 'ekrataiouto pneumatī' in 1v80. explain that 'pneumatī' now can be found in every known copy of the Gospels except four, if in these 996 places out of a thousand it is an interpolation? Is it credible that all the remaining uncials, and every known cursive copy, besides all the Lectionaries, should have been corrupted in this way? Is it credible to suppose that the truth should survive exclusively at this time in only four uncials, B, Aleph from the fourth century, D from the sixth, and L from the eighth?" End of quote.

God the Father knew that both John Baptist and our Lord needed thirty years of "waxing strong in spirit," before they were ready for their ministries." Luke 1v80, 2v40. God will give us time to grow, for He is a thoughtful Father who will not overburden us, and "much more" than any earthly parent will wait for, and watch over, our spiritual development, and will graciously and kindly recognise and make allowances for our immaturity. Even in our immaturity we can know our Heavenly Father's "much more" generous giving, and His outpourings of the Holy Spirit. Luke 11v9-13. It is a great pity that the Church is emphasising intellectual growth, but neglecting growth in spiritual strength and power, strength of spirit is an essential part of prophetic ministry. However, we must always remember that God's spiritual gifts and ministry gifts are not products of our own personality, they are "charismata," grace gifts from our Heavenly Father.

The need to know the Christian ABC of theology to grow as Christian babes.

In 1Peter 2v2, Peter tells us to "Intensely yearn for the unadulterated milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby." All Christians need food for the mind, soul and spirit, God's babes need God's milk, "gala," of the Word, the foundation truths Paul mentioned in Heb 6v1-3; mature Christians need the solid food, ("broma," 1Cor 3v2, "stereas trophes," Heb 5v12-14.) of the Word of God. The foundation truths of Heb 6v1-3. are, repentance from dead works, faith towards God, doctrine about baptisms, (baptism in water and baptism in the Holy Spirit), the laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgement.

The word that Peter uses for "intensely yearn" is "epipothēo," (NT:1971) it occurs nine times in the New Testament, and on each occasion it is used to describe intense yearning. In Rom 1v11, Paul states his intense longing to see the Romans to impart some spiritual grace gift to them. Paul uses "epipothēo" in 2Cor 9v14 to speak of the intense longing of the Jews at Jerusalem for the Gentile Corinthian Christians, and their appreciation of their generous gifts. In Phil 1v8,26, Paul said that both he and Epaphroditus greatly longed for renewed fellowship with the Philipians. In 1Thess 3v6 Timothy brought the news of the great desire of the Christians at Thessalonica to see Paul and his helpers, and Paul tells them that he greatly longed to see them too. In 2Tim 1v2-4, Paul said that he longed to see Timothy, his beloved son in the faith. In 2Cor 5v2, Paul speaks of his great longing to be clothed with his new heavenly body at the Christ's return. There are several possible translations for James 4v5; Alford feels that, "The Spirit that He placed in us jealously desires us," is the best one, and quotes, Deut 32v10, Num 35v34 and Ezek 36v27, to show God's jealous caring love. The choice is between the human spirit, and the Holy Spirit, who takes up His dwelling in us. Finally, in 1Peter 2v2, Peter exhorts the babes in Christ to earnestly desire the genuine milk of God's Word, so that they can become spiritually strong. All Christians can and should grow spiritually strong in this way.

"Waxing strong in spirit" is an essential prerequisite for the operation of a powerful prophetic ministry, the divinely given gift of prophetic ministry is developed by divine education, through continuous manifestations of revelation wisdom and knowledge, and acts of divine power. The human response to this education should be submission to God, prayer and fasting, and a deep study of the Word of God, for even the greatest prophets can err if they do not know the correct meaning of the Scriptures, just as John Baptist did when he asked the Lord Jesus, "Art thou He that should come? or look we for another." Jesus asked John to consider the wisdom and knowledge imparted in His preaching to the poor, and the signs, wonders and miracles that He did, all of which fulfilled prophecy and proved that He was the promised Messiah. Mark 12v24,27, Luke 7v19-23, NB: v22 with Isaiah 8v18, 11v1-3, 29v18,19, 35v3-10, 42v1-7, 60v1-3, 61v1-3.

NB: It is essential to grasp what the Scriptures say about the make-up of the human personality.

The Bible states that we are a soul that possesses a body and spirit; the body puts us in contact with earth, and the spirit puts us in contact with heaven. 1Thess 5v23, Heb 4v12, Rev 1v10, 4v2. Many Christians are so ignorant about spiritual things and spiritual gifts, that the mere mention of the word "spirit," makes them suspicious and they think it is "spiritualism." We should remember the " God is a Spirit," Jn.4v24., and His good angels are spirits, Heb 1v13,14, and everybody, including Christians, have an organ called their spirit. The Bible condemns the seeking of evil spirits via Spiritualism and Witchcraft, not spiritual experience from God. We need to know the following facts.

1) Our spirit was renewed at conversion.

When we became Christians, our spirit, which was dead to God because of our sins, was "quickenened," or "born again," and we received the spirit of adopted sons, which enables us to contact God and cry "Abba," that is, "Father." Christians can, and should, experience sitting in heavenly places in Christ through their renewed spirit. Eph 2v1-6, 6v10-20, John 1v12,13, 3v3-13, Rom 8v14-19, Col 3v1-3. Peter tells us in 2Pet.1v4., that we are partakers, "koinonoi," that is, "sharers," of the divine nature. Our spiritual rebirth at conversion enables us to receive the life of Jesus through our renewed spirit, and to share His life with others, and minister to those in need of spiritual and physical help. The needy world is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. Jesus earnestly desires us to communicate His life to them.

2) Our spirit is our means of contact with God and our worship of God.

In Prov 20v27, Solomon said, "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord," it is the means whereby God lights the human personality, and lights the world through that personality. The spiritual blessings that come to Christians from God come upon their spirits. Eph 1v3, 5v19, Col.1v9, 3v16, 1Peter 2v5. God intends Christians to experience spiritual blessings and manifest spiritual gifts, and sing divinely inspired spiritual songs. 1Cor 12v1, 14v1,37, Eph 1v3, 5v19, Col 3v16. However, Christians can be carnal, "sarkikos," instead of spiritual, "pneumatikos." 1Cor 2v13-15, 3v1-4. The spiritual Christian can, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, discern things through their spirit, whereas a carnal Christian may have great difficulty in doing the same. Sowing to the flesh ends in corruption and spiritual death, whereas sowing to the spirit, that is, obeying God and living in communion with God in the spirit, results in eternal blessedness. Gal 6v1,7,8.

God desires His Church to be a spiritual house, spiritually equipped to fight the evil spiritual forces that come against it. 1Peter 2v5, Eph 6v12. Jesus said that only worship in spirit and truth is acceptable to God, and that unless a person's spirit is in touch with God, their worship is in vain. Intellectual knowledge of the truth is not sufficient, there has to be a living contact with God in spirit. Matt 15v8, Mark 7v6, John 4v21-24. The people who opposed Christ prayed regularly, but their worship and prayer was in vain. True spiritual worship is not lip worship, it is heart worship linked to God by vital spiritual contact.

Paul warns us in 2Tim 3v1,5, that one of the great perils of this day will be, a form of godliness without the power. "Form," is "morphosin," which means a shadowy pencilled outline without any reality, it is religion without contact with God. People can go through a Christian form and yet have no contact with God. God intends that prophetic ministry should bring people from intellectual knowledge of spiritual gifts and spiritual ministry, to a vital experience of God and His gifts.

3) Our spirit is the means of fellowship between Christians.

Because our spirits are "born again" and renewed we cannot only contact God, we can have fellowship with other Christians in the spirit. We need the spiritual help and companionship of other Christians otherwise we grow spiritually lonely and ineffective, even Paul found that his ministry was limited without the right kind of spiritual fellowship. 2Cor 2v12,13. We are intended to draw spiritual strength from one another as well as directly from the Lord, and this brings a real sense of dependence upon one another and a growth together in Christian love. 1Cor 12v21-26, Eph 4v11-16. The New Testament speaks of an incredibly beautiful "fellowship of the spirit," Phil.2v1-5.

Philemon v6. Christianity consists of much more than an intellectual sharing of doctrinal truth, there is a fellowship and sharing of spiritual life and love in Christ, that is heaven upon earth. 1John 1v3,6,7. United together with God and Christ, we can experience a heavenly oneness that is indescribably holy and beautiful. John 17v22-26. In the world there is a terrible spirit of competition, "the rat race," which is a by-product of sin and selfishness. People build up barriers inside themselves to protect their emotions from an evil and unloving world, and become lonely and starved within. In formal services people seldom get to really know each other, and often never experience a real sharing and fellowship of the Spirit. God desires to break down the inner barriers within us and He wants us to know, trust and love each other, and prophetic ministry is intended to facilitate this.

4) Our spirit is God's channel for giving us spiritual gifts and spiritual ministry.

The Holy Spirit communicates His spiritual gifts to us through our spirits, when He uses us to be the channel of His power, love and tenderness. He graciously gives us part of His unlimited abilities; this was the secret of Paul's ministry. Rom 7v6, 8v1,2,4,5,9-16,26,27, 15v19, 1Cor 2v4,10-14, Eph 2v18,22. Paul knew what it was to be "strengthened with might by His spirit, in the inner man," and the reality of a strong faith and a transforming experience of Christ's love because of it, and he prayed for the Ephesians to have the same experience. Paul said that the Spirit's power can do more for us than we can ask or think. Eph 3v16-21. In Rom 1v9, Paul writes that he served God with his spirit. Exercise of the spirit is not exercise of the mind, notice the difference between mind and spirit in Heb 4v12,13, many preachers exercise their minds when they preach and pray, but the spiritual deadness of their preaching and praying shows that they do not exercise their spirits. Christ could say that His words were spirit and life, and so people were greatly affected by them. John 6v63, 7v45,46. We too should not rely on oratory, but should preach with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven. 1Peter 1v12, James 3v1.

Jesus told His townspeople at Nazareth that He was anointed "to preach good news to the poor," "ptochois," the penniless beggars who would feel and admit their need. Jesus was anointed "to preach as an herald, deliverance to the captives." The Greek word for captives is "aichmalotois," which means "captured prisoners at spear point;" Christ was "sent," "apestalken me," to deliver these captives of sin, sickness and Satan, He was also anointed and sent to bring recovery of sight to the blind.

Jesus turned the roll of Scripture back from Isaiah 61v1 to Isaiah 58v6, and quoted, "to set at liberty them that are bruised," or better, "to send forth the crushed in liberty." Hallelujah! "Bruised," is "tethrausmenous," from "thrauo," it means, "to break in pieces." Praise be to God, Jesus can heal the broken in heart and body, and put all the pieces together and send them forth in liberty. All texts omit "heal the broken hearted," however this idea is included in "sending forth the crushed in liberty."

Jesus was sent and anointed "to preach the acceptable year of the Lord," the year of Jubilee, the year when all captives and slaves were released, all debts were cancelled, and all lost inheritances were restored. Lev 25v8-17. This Scripture was fulfilled through the strong and loving soul of Jesus. Luke 4v21. Divine life and power poured through Him to needy people and delivered them. We see apostolic and prophetic ministry in its most perfect manifestation in our Lord's ministry.

By quoting from Isaiah 58v6, Jesus emphasised that He was not just sent to talk, or be an out of touch holy man, He was deeply involved with peoples needs, and sent to deliver them and send them forth in liberty. We read in Isaiah 58v5-8: "When you fast, you make yourselves suffer; you bow your heads low like a blade of grass and spread out sackcloth and ashes to lie on. Is that what you call fasting? Do you think I will be pleased with that? v6. The kind of fasting I want is this: Remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice (stop oppressing those who work for you and treat them fairly), and let the oppressed go free. v7. Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives. v8. Then my favour will shine on you like the morning sun, and your wounds will be quickly healed. I will always be with you to save you; my presence will protect you on every side. v9. When you pray, I will answer you. When you call to me, I will respond. "If you put an end to oppression, to every gesture of contempt, and to every evil word; v10. if you feed the hungry and satisfy those who are in need (help those in trouble), then the darkness around you will turn to the brightness of noon. v11. And I will always guide you and satisfy you with good things. I will keep you strong and well. You will be like a garden that has plenty of water, like a spring of water that never goes dry." (TEV etc)

From Isaiah 58v1-14, we see that God rejects fasting and prayer, when it is formal, empty and lacking in love, and does not meet people's real needs. God informs us that the thing that energises faith and prevailing prayer is practical caring love. Gal 5v6. Our Lord's ministry enshrined the desire of God in Isaiah 58, we read in Luke 4v18,19. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives ("aichmalotois" NT:164, prisoners of war at spearpoint will be released), and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those that are bruised, v19. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

We read in Psalm 69v8,9, that Christ's love for people had driven Him to a life of fasting and prayer, so that He could be the perfect channel of His Father's love and mercy, and He manifested the ultimate in mercy and healing gifts, and met the deep needs of all who came to Him. Jesus came to make people whole, and release them from physical, emotional and spiritual problems, and the evil forces that injure, oppress and destroy mankind. Luke 4v16-21. Jesus warned the Jews in Luke 21v24, that rejection of God's mercy would open them to Satan's merciless attacks, and result in them being taken captive at spearpoint (the future passive of "aichmalotizo" NT:163) and dispersed among the nations. Our Lord's broken hearted sobbing in Luke 19v41-44, shows that the horrific events which took place at the destruction of Jerusalem were the very last thing that Jesus and His Father desired.

Paul tells us the secret of his powerful ministry in 2Cor 10v4,5, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; v5. Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity (the present active participle of "aichmalotizo" NT:163, a captive at spearpoint in war) every thought to the obedience of Christ." (KJV) Paul writes in 2Cor 10v4,5, that the weapons of our warfare and campaign, "strateias," are not of the flesh, "sarkika," that is, fleshly ability such as craft, worldly power, wisdom, and oratory. Paul states that we fight with Divine weapons, which are "mighty before God." God's spiritual gifts "tear down fortresses," and "cast down reasonings and imaginations." Even the most entrenched and seemingly impregnable citadels of Satan, that keep people from a knowledge of God, can be destroyed by the mighty gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit. Paul recognised that the battle for people's souls was in their minds and thoughts, but he did not fight with carnal reasonings, but with God's power and gifts. By these he could bring into captivity (the present active participle of "aichmalotizo" NT:163, take captive at spearpoint) every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Both Luke 4v18. and 2Cor 10v5, inform us, that by the power of God, Satan's dominion over people's thoughts and minds, can be broken and brought as a captive in war to Christ. God can completely heal people with broken hearts, minds and spirits, through spiritual gifts, which outpour the love, faith and power of God. A spiritual ministry is never mere talk, a person can say exactly the same words and prayers, but without a living contact with God, they will minister no spiritual blessing, and no bring no blessing, healing and release to people. 1Cor 2v4, 4v20, 1Thess 1v5. Bringing people into a living, transforming, and liberating relationship with God, is the most important function of prophetic ministry.

In the Old Testament God gave prophetic ministries to young men, like Jeremiah, Daniel, Samuel, and the young prophets of 2Kings 2v3,5, to mention but a few. The apostles of Christ, developed and manifested some of the miraculous aspects of prophetic ministry under the guidance of Christ, and these were young men. We are told in Acts 2v17,18, that God has promised to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, and that He will give prophecy and visions to His dear sons and daughters. Through prophetic ministry God can reveal when a timid Christian has a prophecy, and even the details of that prophecy, to encourage them to manifest spiritual gifts. If this kind of prophetic ministry is lacking in churches, the manifestation and development of spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries will be hindered.

NB: Prophetic ministry in the last days.

In this age of grace the emphasis has been upon mercy, not Law or judgement, and so we see few acts of judgement by God through spiritual gifts, however, as this age nears its end, we will see a great increase in wickedness, and as a result more acts of judgement by spiritual gifts. We read in Rev 11v5,6, that the two witnesses at Jerusalem will have the authority and power to destroy their enemies with fire, and to smite the earth with plagues, "**AS OFT AS THEY DESIRE.**" Prophetic ministries like Moses and Elijah will be again restored to certain chosen and anointed children of God. 2Kings 1v1-18. It needs gifts like these to evangelise the militant godless countries of today, in a truly effective way. In 2Kings 13v14-19, we see that we get what we believe for, a statement which is confirmed by our Saviour in Mark 11v22-24, so let us set our faith as high and wide as the Scriptures, and we will see God do wonderful things. We already have some reliable reports of miraculous transportation as in 1Kings 18v12 and Acts 8v38-40, and miraculous protection as in Luke 4v29,30, John 8v59, 10v39. Let us look to God in these last dark days to show forth His glory through mighty prophetic ministry. Matt 11v25,26, Luke 10v21.

C) "Thirdly Teachers," "Some Pastor-Teachers," "Elders," "Bishops."

Unbiased authorities state with Dr. Hort, that "poimen," shepherd or pastor; "episkopos," bishop, or more accurately, overseer; "didaskalos," teacher; and "presbuteros" elder; are all speaking of the same office. The elders of the early Church were its pastors, overseers and teachers. Paul said that the elders of Ephesus had the oversight, "episkopein," of their church, that is, they were its overseers; and he charged them as shepherds, pastors and teachers to feed and care lovingly for God's flock. Acts 20v17,28-32. In 1Peter 5v1-3, Peter states that elders have to shepherd, teach and feed God's flock, in taking their oversight, "episkopountes," of His Church. In Titus 1v5-7,

elders and bishops are looked upon as the same office. In Eph 4v11, the office of pastors and teachers are linked together by the construction of the Greek, "tous de poimenas kai didaskalous." The "tous de," "some as," is lacking before "didaskalous," which indicates that they were not two distinct offices. All the elders of the early Church had to be "apt to teach," and were "to feed the flock of God" with truth, so they were "teachers." The teachers mentioned third in the list in 1Cor 12v28, are undoubtedly the elders, who were to teach and lead each local church by their godly example as well as by their words. Heb 13v7. In 1Peter 5v1-5, "examples," means "patterns" of the flock.

New Testament elders were certainly not either "helpers" or "governments," which are sixth and seventh in the list in 1Cor 12v28, which obviously refer to the work of deacons. Elders had a very high authority and were very highly regarded, as can be seen from the place and regard, which the apostles gave to the elders of Jerusalem. Acts 15v4,6,22,23. Feeding and guiding the flock of God into an experience of spiritual truth, not just an intellectual knowledge of the truth, is a truly great and important work for God, and this is why elders who pastor and teach are third in the list of the ministries of the Church.

Leaders of Christian meetings are not to be any ambitious, or ill equipped person; they should be pastor-elders with the qualifications laid down in 1Tim 3v1-7, Titus 1v5-9 and James 5v14-16. Elders with these qualifications are to be highly esteemed, and their Scriptural teaching, experience and wisdom are to be recognised and followed. Elders, not Youngsters, should shepherd and guide our churches. God appointed wise, godly, spiritual, and mature grey-haired elders with a proven heaven-blessed spiritual ministry to shepherd and guide His sheep. Lev 19v32. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God, I am the Lord." True elders aim to bless and build up the body of Christ, not draw disciples after themselves, or cause division. They protect the flock of God not divide it, Robertson tells us that the word "poimen," shepherd, is from a root meaning to protect. Jesus said that He was the Good Shepherd who would lay down His life for His sheep. In Heb 13v25, Jesus is called "the Great Shepherd of the sheep." In 1Pet.2v25., Peter says Jesus is "the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls," and in 1Peter 5v4, Peter calls Jesus "the Chief Shepherd." Our Lord uses the verb "poimaino," to shepherd, to commission Peter in John 21v16, and Peter uses it in 1Peter 5v2, for other overseeing elders.

Elders will try to ensure that all things are done "decently and in order," and that both doctrine and experience are kept sound. Titus 1v5,9. Churches have to be preserved from false teachers, ambitious persons and other dangerous wolves that can harm God's flock. Titus 1v11, 2Peter 2v1, Acts 20v28-32. Elders must have a shepherds heart, full of love for God's flock; it is not enough to be an able talker, they must have a faithful and loving ministry. Spiritually lifeless intellectual talking has nothing whatever to do with a true pastoral teaching ministry. A genuine teaching ministry is a Divine gift that imparts truth with Divine life and power, and should not be confused with natural talent, human intellectual training, or oratory. This anointing can only be maintained by prayer, faith and waiting upon God. A person who has a genuine pastor-teacher ministry shuns causing division and preaches the great Scriptural fundamentals, not unprofitable doubtful theories or disputations, their ministry is particularly directed to helping young believers. Acts 8v14, 11v20, 14v21-23, 15v36, 18v27. etc. There are some more important things that we need to note regarding the ministry of elders.

1) Several Pastor-Elders guided each local church.

Leading a local church is too important, and too demanding a task for one man, as W.F.P. Burton said, "It is too much for one man." This is why several, or many elders, were put over each local church, and this is why elders are always spoken of in the plural in the context of the local church. 1Cor 12v28, Heb 13v7,17,24, 1Peter 5v1, Acts 11v30, 13v1-3, 14v23, 15v4,6,22,23. This is particularly true, when, as in Paul's day, there is malicious persecution. Jerome stated that the churches were originally governed by a plurality of presbyters, but in the course of time one was elected to preside over the rest as a remedy against division. Neander says that some think that the local elders presided in rotation however; the important thing is to let Jesus preside over and direct His churches.

The New Testament informs us that there were recognised leaders of each local church, but no exclusive one-man ministry. Paul ordained elders, plural, in every church, singular. Acts 14v23. Even though 1Tim 3v2 and Titus 1v7 speak of "the bishop," "ton episkopon," and of deacons in the plural in 1Tim 3v8,10,12; it must not be thought that each local church was governed by one elder or bishop. Paul in Titus 1v5, speaks of "elders in every city." and Heb 13v7,17 and 1Thess 5v12 speak of local Christian leaders in the plural.

Some would say that there are not enough men with the qualifications of New Testament elders to have plurality of elders in a local church. This is not correct, for many godly Jews, who loved the Scriptures, came to accept Christ, besides the 3,000 out of every nation under heaven who got converted on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2v5,41. Paul went and preached to the Jews first, and got a lot of his best elders from among them. Rom 1v16.2v9,10. If we have the intense revival and many converts which they had in the early Church, there will be more than enough converts and elder brethren, to have a plurality of elders. The New Testament churches had as many elders as

desired the office and had the qualifications, there is no number or limit laid down in the Scriptures, except that there was a plurality of elders. 1Tim 3v1. The advantages of a plurality of pastor-elders over one pastor-elder are as follows.

Churches have better instruction and more spirituality with several pastor-elders.

Christians mature much more quickly when there is a diversity and variety of ministry gifts operating in the local church. What one lacks another may possess, and so the diversities of gift, evangelism, teaching, comfort, and visitation, complement each other. Even the most complete ministry, that of apostle, needs the other members of the body of Christ to be fully effective. Christ can only be manifested in all His fullness, when all parts of His Church work together as a body under Him as its Head. The local church guided by a plurality of elders has greater efficiency in evangelism, better instruction, and greater spirituality.

Churches have greater protection from wolves with several pastor-elders.

A body of elders are better equipped to protect the church from ambitious people in the church, and from persecution and false teachers from outside. Acts.20v28-32. "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety." Prov 11v14, 24v6. Wise Christian leaders or pastors will ensure that they never run the churches on their own, but that decisions and government are shared with other responsible and spiritual people, and the local church as a whole. Several pastor-elders also prevent the great evils of clerical pride, ambition and tyranny. Many pastors and ministers practice a monarchical form of government, and say, "I am monarch of all I survey, My right there is none to dispute." This love of power cost Satan his place in heaven. A plurality of elders also results in greater efficiency in looking after the flock of God in visitation, and a greater knowledge of people's needs, conditions and problems. This brings greater security for the flock, particular when it is under great persecution; it is more difficult to destroy the flock, when there are several or many leaders guiding each local church.

2) The Pastor-Teacher's ministry is pastoral, not dictatorial.

Pastor-elders had authority from God to oversee and guide the local church, but they did not form an ecclesiastical hierarchy. Elders are not to dictate to, or lord it over the Christians in a local church, they are to exercise the care, guidance and superintendence of love. 1Tim 3v4,5, 5v17, Titus 1v9, Acts 20v28-32, Heb 13v7,17, 1Peter 5v2. Elders are the executors of God's Word, not the legislators of their own rules. Indeed, there is no Scripture that says it was the exclusive privilege of elders to baptise converts, or preside at worship or the Lord's table, in fact the very reverse is true. The pastor-elders did not take over everything, the body ministry of the local church continued as before. The elders were not just to show their ability to minister, they had the responsibility to develop the ministries of others in the local church, and this is one of the major functions of a pastor-elder-teacher in the New Testament.

In Matt 20v25-28 and Mark 10v42-45, Jesus states that God's great ones are known by their humble service, and warns Christian leaders that they are not to lord it over, or "play the tyrant" with God's people, and instructs them to be like Him, and be humble servants of the people of God. "Lord it over," in both Matthew and Mark, is "katakuriuousin," the present indicative active of "katakuriueo," (NT:2634), to lord it over someone, to exercise complete control, to exercise dominion, to domineer. "Exercise authority," is "katexousiazousin," the present indicative active of "katexousiazoo," (NT:2715), to exercise authority, to wield full power over, to play the tyrant.

In 1Peter 5v3, Peter remembers our Lord's word's and uses "katakuriueontes," the present active participle of "katakuriueo," to instruct elders that that they are not to be lords over God's heritage, and instructs all God's people, to put on the apron of humility, as His Lord did at the Last Supper. Domination of others is the mark of worldly rulers, and of the demon in the man in Acts 19v13-16, who overpowered "katakuriueo," and prevailed, "ischuo," over the seven sons of Sceva, when they tried to exorcise the demon in the Name of Jesus, without any relationship with Jesus, or any authority to use His Name. "Katakuriueo" only occurs in Matt 20v25, Mark 10v42, Acts 19v6, 1Peter 5v3. Elders are not "to lord it over," over the flock of God, like worldly rulers do, they are to be loving shepherds, as Peter says in 1Peter 5v2, elders are to "feed," or better "shepherd the flock of God." The Greek word is "poimaino," that is, "to act as a shepherd," or "to tend the flocks," it occurs in Matt 2v6, Luke 17v7, John 21v16, Acts 20v28, 1Cor 9v7, Jude v12, Rev 2v27, 7v17, 12v5, 19v5, 1Peter 5v2.

The verb "hegeomai," is used for the rule of elders, it is translated in a variety of ways in the New Testament., it primarily means, to lead, to guide, to consider, to esteem. In Phil 2v3, Paul tells us that we are "to esteem" other Christians as better than ourselves; and in 1Thess 3v15, he says that we are not to consider even disorderly Christians as enemies, but look upon them as brothers. In Acts 14v12, Paul is spoken of as the chief speaker. In Acts 15v22, "hegoumenous," the present participle of "hegeomai," is used as a noun, "leaders, leading men," in describing Paul and Barnabus as "leading men among the brethren." In 1Thess 5v13, Paul says that we are to "esteem," "hegeisthai," the present middle infinitive, of "hegeomai," Christian leaders very highly because of their

work. In Luke 22v25-27, Jesus gives the greatest light upon the use of "hegeomai" as it is applied to Christian leaders, the word translated "chief" in v26, is "hegoumenos," the present middle participle of "hegeomai," to lead, to be the leader. Jesus says that His leaders are to be the slaves and servants of the flock, and are not even to be looked upon as "Benefactors," never mind "Lords," the greatest is to become as the youngest, and the leader as the slave. We can see, then, that though "hegemon," the noun, denoted elevated rulers, and "hegeomai," the adjective, meant leadership and rule, it was not to be in the spirit of the world, but in the spirit of Christ, who was among us as one who serves. Luke 22v27.

Vine says that "hegeomai" should be translated in Heb 13v7 and 17 as "guides," so verse 7 says, "Be mindful of those who are guiding you," and verse 17, "Give ear to those who guide you, and be willing to do what they say." The word translated "obey" in Heb 13v17 is "peitho," which means "to persuade," and Vine says, "The obedience suggested is not by submission to authority but resulting from persuasion." The teaching and suggestions of the elders are acceptable because they are seen to be reasonable, not because they are dictatorial. In Heb 13v17. "submit," is "hupеiko," which is only used here, it means "to yield under," the younger particularly are to submit themselves to the elder, but we must not forget that Peter tells us that the elders have also to submit themselves to the younger, for all have to submit themselves to each other, and all are to submit themselves to Christ. Eph 5v21 1Peter 5v5. "Hupotasso."

In 1Thess 5v12 Paul directs the Thessalonians to appreciate, and get to know, and follow the leaders who laboured amongst them. The words "over you in the Lord," mean literally, "those who stand in front of you," the words "admonish you," mean, "to put into the mind," they gave wise counsel and put sense into the mind, sometimes a thankless and difficult task. No wonder that the writer to the Hebrews tells us to remember, and have hallowed memories of the lives of godly Christian leaders.

Another word used for the rule of elders in Titus 3v8,14, is "maintain," "proisteemi," which means, to stand before, and hence, to direct, lead, attend to, and to maintain. It speaks of care, diligence, guidance and maintenance. "Proisteemi" also occurs in Rom 12v8, 1Thess 5v12 and 1Tim 5v17, all of which speak of the thoughtful guidance and rule of the elders of a church, and in 1Tim 3v4,5,12 of the able guidance and maintenance of elders of their own families, for elders have to be able to properly guide their own families before they can guide a church. Elders have to love, develop, guide and maintain God's flock, as a good father does his own beloved family.

NB: Elders did not have exclusive rule of the churches.

The government by elders did not exclude the whole local church participating in the management of church affairs as Acts 15, etc., makes quite clear. The rule of the local church was not left entirely in the hands of the elders, they had the spiritual oversight of the local church, but not the exclusive rule of the church, important matters were brought before the whole local church as Jesus instructed in Matt 18v15-17. Matters were not settled by a body of elders or ministers in secret. In matters of policy all the local church could, and did, contribute and suggest answers and direction. In matters of discipline, justice was not only done, it was seen to be done by all. This kind of procedure makes all the difference between failure and success in a church. A leading Pentecostal minister has told me, that the weekly church meeting at which policy and problems are discussed and settled is one of the major reasons for the outstanding success of the Swedish Pentecostal churches, and I can well believe it. If church members cannot be trusted with decisions, there is no possibility for progress. In the early Church there were no secret sessions and unknown decisions behind locked doors; there was no clerical hierarchy. The representatives of the church at Antioch and the whole body of disciples at Jerusalem had a share in the decision concerning the relation of the Church to Judaism; it was the decision of the whole Christian community. Acts 15v1,12,30-33, 11v26,29, 14v27,28.

The elders work, however, is not just to carry out the common will of the people, all were to wait upon God for His answer, and then they were to perform the revealed desires of the Holy Spirit. Acts.15v28. The Holy Spirit made the elders overseers; they had to carry out His desires. Acts 20v28. Their first work was to watch their own spiritual condition, "take heed unto your selves," and then to the flock of God. It is for this reason that we find the elders at Antioch, gathered for prayer and waiting upon God, and to this praying and worshipping leadership God moved to direct Barnabus and Paul on an apostolic mission. These leaders led in prayer and worship, the flocks followed them and the results were amazing, may we follow their example. These church members were not dominated by their leaders, nor were they unhappy with them, they loved and trusted them for their love, genuine humility and sacrificial service. Acts.15v26.

3) Pastor-elders were usually local men who were well known and well loved.

We see from Acts 13v1-4 that mature prophetic and teaching ministries went to help and guide infant churches, and to correct things that were deficient. Titus1v5. The church at Antioch was founded by the evangelistic efforts of ordinary Christians and so the converts needed outside help to guide them into New Testament truth and

experience. Outstanding Christian prophets and teachers came to help them for about three years until the ministries in the church at Antioch had developed and matured. We also know that the New Testament speaks of Christians receiving "the right hand of fellowship," and of well respected Christians with ministry gifts receiving "letters of commendation." Gal 2v9, Acts 15v25. Paul and Barnabus: Acts 18v27. Apollos: 1Cor 16v10,11, Phil 2v19-23: Epaphroditus Phil 2v25-30: Phoebe Rom 16v1: Mark Col 4v10: Titus and friends 2Cor 8v19-23. The Jewish synagogues, could, if they desired, call in a trained Rabbi; in the early Church prophets or pastor elders from other churches, could, under the direction of Christ, be sent to help either infant or mature churches. Apart from this temporary help given to infant churches, and these visits by mature ministries, we find no other rule other than the superintendence of local men. These visiting ministries were accepted and welcomed, but they certainly did not take over the exclusive permanent oversight of the churches, this was the work of the local elders as we see from Acts 20v17-38. We see no other ruling ministries in the church at Ephesus other than the elders. Paul elected these pastor-elders out of the local church, the church did not import its permanent pastor-elders, they were local men.

In the New Testament we find no bringing in of elders or "ministers" from outside to permanently and exclusively run a local church, never mind the choosing of a minister by a centrally governed ordaining council. Mature New Testament churches did not elect strangers, of whom they knew little or nothing about, to run their churches, the pastor-elders were men who were well known for their character, talents, ministry, spirituality and personality by all the members of the local church. The practice of importing one person to take over the exclusive rule of a local church, whether it is by central government or local invitation, is unscriptural. The invitation of some well-known ministry to help with the local elders took place, but there was no setting aside of the local leadership. There was the recognition of the part that leading ministries had in the body of Christ under the guidance of Christ the Lord, but there was no surrender to them of their own responsibilities.

From the New Testament we see that the early Church ministries desired to put the local church in the hands of local people as soon as possible. Paul and his helpers appointed local leaders in 1 to 3 years of churches being founded. Without such outstanding ministries it would obviously take longer for an infant church to develop its own ministries. However, it is a tragedy when churches are still infant churches, which are full of immature baby Christians, and still in need of imported supervision, ten, twenty, thirty, or even forty years after they are founded. The problem is that some leaders want to make their congregations permanently dependent upon them; their aim is personal or denominational kingdom building, not the spiritual growth of the Christians in their churches.

4) Our attitude to denominational churches and their ministers.

Denominational churches and their ministers must be judged on their individual merits, churches of the same denomination vary very considerably. Some churches are centres of evangelism, fellowship, and teaching; others are so far from God that they are mission fields, and have no ministries. Some denominational churches are more evangelical and Pentecostal than many Pentecostal churches, whereas others reject the gifts of the Holy Spirit; the new wine put into their old bottles causes them to burst, and the new wine spills out elsewhere.

What, then, should be our attitude to denominational churches and their ministers? We should ask ourselves the following questions. What is the spiritual condition of a church, and what does the Lord want me to do about it? Is the church an opportunity for witness, or is it a fellowship centre? Is it profitable for evangelistic work or teaching? Has the minister a ministry gift from Christ, and a good and sound Bible teaching ministry? Is he a man of prayer, able and willing to pray a prayer of faith for the sick? Does he have the qualifications of a pastor-elder laid down in 1Tim 3, Titus 1, and James 5? Does he love his flock? Does he welcome the Holy Spirit's workings and gifts? If he does, then this man, or woman, should receive our help and support, for such a church will enjoy the guidance and blessing of God.

Even if a church or minister is spiritually dead we should not cut off all association or fellowship from them. Spirit filled Christians should lovingly witness in these churches of their experience and try to bring them into blessing. This responsibility should not be shirked. Jesus and Paul preached in synagogues until they were violently opposed, and their message rejected. Acts 18v1-11, 28v17-31. We too should be prepared to suffer persecution in witnessing about Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Churches of all kinds have been transformed by the radiant witness of truly Spirit-filled Christians, and have become centres of evangelism and blessing. Those who take on this task should make sure that they have some really lively, loving and prayerful fellowship behind them, to which they can resort to for spiritual sustenance and help. However, one does not have to become a member of a lively Spirit-filled group to have fellowship with them, and be blessed of God. Membership is men's way; fellowship is God's way. Many people join the wrong ship, membership confines us within a church, fellowship reaches out to the body of Christ. If a denominational church can become a centre of blessing, it will forward God's work, and this is what we should try to achieve. Love suffers long and is kind, and desires, and strives to see others blessed.

We are, then, to follow church leaders if they fulfil God's qualifications and God's Word, and work with spiritual pastor-elders in the local church, but if they become formal and deny and oppose God's power, we are told to turn

away from them by the apostle Paul. 2Tim 3v1,5. In 2Tim 3v5. the word for "form," is "morphosin," a rare word which means, according to A.T. Robinson, "the rough sketch, the pencilling of the 'morphe,' the outline without the substance." The word is only found in the New Testament here in 2Tim 3v5 and in Rom 2v20, where Paul said the Jews had an outline of God's truth without the experience of that truth. Denominational churches that oppose and reject the saving power of Christ, and the movings and gifts of the Holy Spirit, are empty of spiritual reality, and Christians will have to separate from them, even as the early Christians had to leave the synagogues that rejected Christ and His power. Acts 13v42-52. In Acts 18v4-8, we see that Paul started his meetings next door to the synagogue in the house of Titus Justus, after the Jews had rejected Christ and vital New Testament truth, and division can occur for these very same reasons today. Let us help seekers with every means at our disposal, but let us never compromise truth to keep in with unspiritual or unconverted "Christian leaders."

5) How old does a person have to be to become a Pastor-Elder?

The Jews and other nations highly respected wise old men; indeed it was a command of God. We read in Lev 19v32, "You shall rise up before the face ("pawneem," Strong's OT:6440) of the grey headed ("seybah," Strong's OT:7872, the feminine of Strong's OT:7869), and honour the face ("pawneem," Strong's OT:6440) of the aged ("zagen," Strong's NT:2205, old man, old woman, elder in authority), and fear and revere your God; I am Yahweh. See also Lev 19v32, Deut 32v7, Job 12v12, Prov 16v31. The very old, who are wise, godly and spiritual, are obviously elders, the question is, "At what age can a person be a pastor-elder?" We read in Acts.7v58 that Paul was a "young man," "neonias," however, there is fairly strong evidence that Paul the persecutor was a member of the Sanhedrin, if not at Stephen's death, certainly soon afterwards, for Paul states that he not only had power given to him from the High Priest to imprison Christians, but that "when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them." Acts 26v10. Many scholars believe that this proves that Paul was a member of the Jews supreme court of judicature, the Sanhedrin, which alone had this right, and so was looked upon as an elder. So though Paul is said to be a "young man," most people believe he was at least 30 years of age, and having a vote in the Sanhedrin was looked upon as an elder. Matt 26v59, Luke 22v26, Acts 22v5.

Upon his conversion Paul proclaimed as a herald that Jesus was the Son of God, and the Messiah of promise. John 20v39, 20v28. Within six years Paul taught the converts at Antioch with Barnabus, as a pastor-teacher. Acts 11v26. In Acts 13v1, about three years later Paul is mentioned among leading prophetic and teaching ministries at Antioch, so Paul fulfilled an elder's ministry at about 40. The law would not allow people to be priests under 30 years of age. Num 4v3,23,30,35,39,43,47, Lev 8v30, 1Chron 23v3. One notable expositor states that he had known Christians of about 30 who had the qualifications laid down for elders in 1Tim 3 and Titus 1; and that he had known men of 60 who did not. **This is the crux of the matter, if a person over 30 has reached the maturity and spirituality laid down in Timothy and Titus, then they can function as an elder. If they do not have these qualities, they should not be an elder, even if they are a 100.** There may be some like Paul, who can fulfil the office of pastor-elder-teacher, under the age of 40. However, it is not age that is the most important factor in choosing elders, the length and depth of Christian experience, an ability to shepherd, love, overseer, teach and guide people into a deep experience of God are the really essential qualifications of elders.

It is not desire for position, but love of people and a spiritual ministry gift from Christ that makes New Testament elders, or, indeed, any New Testament ministry. Every New Testament elder has to have a pastor's heart of love, or he is not a New Testament elder-teacher. Teachers with no love for Christ's flock, and I mean a genuine concern, not a professional bed-side manner, should not be leaders in God's work. There will, obviously, be in each local church, young men who are developing ministries given to them by Christ, that will later make them a recognised elder. A young person can be used of God in prophetic and evangelistic ministry, without being in charge of a church. Christ gave young men, apostolic and evangelistic ministries, but they could not take on the work of an elder, until they were old enough to do so. God knows that it needs wise, spiritual, older men, with both an experience of God, and an experience of life, to guide His people.

God intends all the ministry gifts to be manifested and developed in the local church under the supervision of mature prophetic and pastor-teacher ministries, until people are able to perform the ministries that God has given to them, without supervision and guidance. New Testament ministry is not a title in name only; they are a ministry that manifest Christ's power, truth and love. There are many who are called elder or pastor by men, who are not in God's eyes; there are others who are not called elder or pastor by men, who are so in God's eyes, for they are fulfilling a ministry given to them by Christ.

A New Testament ministry is not a seeking or scrambling for position and power; it is a ministry of Christ's love, power and truth to others. God has given many solemn and terrible warnings against false shepherds, who fail to care for God's flock. Jer 23v1-6, Matt 23v1-39, Ezek 34v1-31. God hates shepherds who "with force and severity" dominate God's flock. God says, "Woe to these shepherds, -- I will make them cease from feeding sheep, --- I shall deliver my sheep from their mouth." Ezek 34v3,4,10. Being a shepherd is not only a great privilege, it is also a very grave responsibility, and it should not be entertained lightly. No one will ever get away with spoiling God's flock, no

matter how eminent their position, or exalted their reputation amongst men or denominations. James gives the solemn warning, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall be judged with special strictness and a more severe standard." James 3v1. Greater condemnation, not greater reward, comes to those who fail to lead God's flock in the way He intends.

6) Pastor-Elders, paid ministry and deacons.

It is quite unscriptural to think that a person has to leave secular work to be a pastor-elder. In the early Church if it was necessary for an elder to give himself to church responsibilities, or to study, the local church made it up to him, but there was no regular princely stipend that some modern "prosperity gospel" preachers expect and demand. Christ and His apostles were satisfied with their essential needs for food being met by people's hospitality. Luke 8v1-3. Paul worked to keep himself while he was engaged in apostolic evangelism, he claimed the right for financial support, but often did not use it, so that there could be no criticism of his message. 1Tim 5v17,18, 1Cor 9v1-27. NB: v12,18. As we have already seen from Dr. Hatch; "There is no early trace of the later idea, that buying, and selling, handicraft and farming, were in themselves inconsistent with the office of a Christian minister. The bishops and presbyters of those early days kept banks, practised medicine, wrought as silver-smiths, tended sheep, or sold their goods in open market. They were men of the world taking part in the ordinary business of life."

That some pastor-elders did devote themselves entirely to the ministry, study and prayer and were financially supported, is confirmed by Peter, who says that elders were not to do their work for "filthy lucre," or "for sordid gain and personal profit." 1Peter 5v2. Certainly the pressure upon Christians with outstanding ministry gifts, can be so great that, like Jesus and the twelve apostles, they have to choose others to do even charitable works. The meeting of people's needs consumed all of their time, "It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables. --- But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word." Acts 6v2-4. However, because there were several, or many, elders over each local church, and they all usually worked in secular employment, there was no drain on the financial resources of the churches, and this could be used to help the pioneer and itinerant ministries where necessary, and particularly to meet the needs of poor Christians. Acts 2v44, 4v31-37, NB: Acts 3v6, Gal 6v6,9,10, 2Cor 8v1 to 9v15, Phil 4v14-19. The early Church did not pay for expensive buildings, Christ's base was a simple home in Capernaum, not a mansion, or expensive headquarters. Matt 4v13, 8v5, 11v28, 17v24. Mark 1v21, 2v1, 9v33, Luke 4v23-31, 7v1, 10v15, John 2v12, 4v46, 6v17-24,59.

Deacons.

Financial matters were not handled by those who had the spiritual oversight of the churches. Deacons had the responsibility for charitable work, and were to relieve the spiritual ministries of the practical caring for the needs of the poor. 1Tim 3v8-13, Acts 6v1-6. Deacons fulfil the ministries of "helps," "antilempseis," which means an undertaking on the behalf of another; it is used in the Septuagint of help from God and men. Deacons could also come under the description of "governments," "kuberneseis," literally refers to the steering and piloting of a ship, so "organisers, administrators," this could refer to the administration of funds. The more important ministry of pastor-elders comes third in the list under "teachers," so it is doubtful if it would be mentioned again, and certainly not after "helps." We know the word "diakonos," "deacon," is also used of the higher spiritual ministries, 1Cor 3v5, 2Cor 3v6, 6v4, however, Paul uses "diakonos" in this context to show that the higher ministries are servants, not lords, over God's flock.

In Greek literature "diakonos" spoke of a servant or slave within a household, whose chief work was waiting upon his master at the table, and sometimes in marketing for him. The English equivalent to the Greek usage would be "menial," or "servant," though it can speak of someone giving free service or even civil rule as in Rom 13v4. In both the Old Testament and New Testament the poor had a major place in receiving the gifts of God's people; the Old Testament tithe was for the poor, fatherless and stranger as well as the Levite. The tithe was Israel's income tax, and it not only upheld Israel's religious system, it was also used for Israel's welfare state aid for the poor, fatherless, widow and stranger. It seems that women could take part in this work of ministering to the poor and needy, we read in Rom 16v1 of "Phebe our sister, which is a servant, that is, deaconess, of the church which is in Cencrea." There can be no doubt that deacons have an important part to play in the work of God, for God is very concerned over the material and physical well-being of His children.

D) Evangelists. Eph 4v11.

In 1Cor 12v28, the ministry of evangelist is almost certainly mentioned under gifts of healings, and possibly workings of miracles as well. Evangelists, as the Greek word "euangelistes" suggests, are proclaimers of the Gospel. "Euangelistes" means literally "a messenger of good;" so evangelists preach, "euaggelion," "glad tiding and good news." To evangelise, "euangelizo," is to proclaim good news of salvation in Jesus. The main theme of an evangelist is Christ and His death for sinners. 1Cor 2v1-5. Evangelists convey the same truths as apostles but do not have the same level of authority and power; the seventy evangelists were not instructed to raise the dead, whereas apostles

were told to do so. Matt 10v1,7,8, Luke 10v1,8,9. Apostles also had the authority from God to judge and discipline both believer and unbeliever who withstood the truth, an authority, which it seems, was lacking in evangelists. Acts 5v1-11, 12v1-6, 18v25, 13v6-12, 1Cor 5v1-5, 1Tim 1v18-20 with 2Tim 2v16-19. Evangelists, like apostles, preach God's love for mankind, and like apostles they have a ministry of signs, wonders and miracles, which results in the founding of churches. However, unlike apostles, they usually do not have the ability to care for converts, or lead them into the fullness of the Spirit, and the manifestation of spiritual gifts.

Philip is a good example of a New Testament evangelist, he founded a thriving church at Samaria, but he did not have the ability to consolidate it, he had to send for Peter and John to lead the converts into the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Acts 8v1-25. Evangelists who have this limitation in their ministries need the help of the more mature apostolic, prophetic, or pastor-teaching ministries to establish their converts in the faith, otherwise the good they have done can be dissipated. It is good to know that those who have little or no ability to feed and care for Christians, can be used in evangelistic ministry. Philip was as willing to follow God's guidance to speak to one person in a wilderness, as he was to preach to an entire city. After Philip had led the Ethiopian eunuch to Jesus and baptised him in water, God gave Philip supernatural transport to his next assignment. May God give us more evangelists like Philip, who have experiences like this.

One has to question the financially demanding structures and commitments of some modern preachers and evangelists, their emphasis upon giving and demands for money, shock and dismay thoughtful Christians, and give unbelievers considerable grounds for criticism. Some openly state that they can only preach to large gatherings in cities, so that they can obtain big offerings to sustain their expensive financial commitments. These are dubious practices in the light of the practice of Jesus and His early Church ministries, who were directed by God, not by financial commitments. It was a good thing for the Ethiopian eunuch that Philip was not directed by the size of the offerings that he could get, and for the Samaritan woman by the well, that our Lord, was driven by the constraint of love, not by a need or desire for finances. Acts 8v26-40, John 4v1-43. The financially undemanding nature of Christ's apostolic band and His early Church ministries, is a Divine design, and it meant that they could be sent anywhere by the Father. **Christ's total poverty censures those who demand riches from God's people, and preach a prosperity gospel. Paul states in 2Cor 8v9, that our Lord was totally destitute.** "He became poor," is "epocheusen," the aorist active indicative of "ptocheuo," to be a beggar, to be reduced to abject poverty. "His poverty," is the noun "ptocheia," which again describes poverty to the point of the danger of starvation, and meant that Jesus did not have one penny in His pocket, which is proved by the incident of the coin in the mouth of the fish. Matt 17v24-27. **Wonderful Jesus! He who owned all things became totally destitute to give us the riches of Heaven. The sacrificial love of the Trinity is beyond praise. Jesus has given us the supreme example of sacrificial apostolic evangelism. He is the pattern to follow.**

The ministry gifts should bring an experimental, not just an intellectual knowledge of God.

God desires His New Testament ministries to bring people to an experimental knowledge of truth and Himself, as well as an intellectual appreciation of truth. This is shown by the Greek words for knowledge in the New Testament. In Eph 3v14-21, Paul prays for the Ephesian Christians to be strengthened with all might by the Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, and that being rooted and grounded in "agape" love, they may be strong enough ("exischuo," 1840, to have full strength) to eagerly grasp ("katalambano," Strong's NT:2638) and know experientially ("ginosko," Strong's NT:1097) the love of Christ that surpasses ("huperballo," Strong's NT:5235, to surpass in throwing, to transcend) knowledge ("gnosis," Strong's NT:1108, knowledge, understanding), so that they might be filled with all the fullness of God.

"Ginosko." (Strong's NT:1097). Scholars say "ginosko" usually means, to know experientially, in contrast to "oida," or "eido," which usually mean to know intuitively, and that it often speaks of knowledge producing a relationship, and an experimental appreciation as well as intellectual knowledge. 1Cor 8v3, Gal 4v9, John 8v32, 14v20,31, 17v3, 1John 2v3,13,14, 4v6,8,16, 5v20. The Scriptures reveal that a deep experiential knowledge of God is brought about by a revelation from God, and not by intellectual effort. Matt 11v25-27, Luke 10v21-24, Eph 1v15-19.

"Epiginosko." (Strong's NT:1921). "To know fully, to fully perceive, to receive full knowledge of, or become fully acquainted with." It suggests an even more special or advanced experimental appreciation than "ginosko," as in 1Cor 13v12, "Now I know ("ginosko") in part, but then I shall fully know ("epiginosko"), even as I am fully known, ("epiginosko").

"Proginosko." (Strong's NT:4267), to know before hand." Is used of God's foreknowledge concerning Christians; Rom 8v28,29, and Israel, Rom 11v2. It is used to speak of Jesus being foreordained to be the Lamb of God before the foundation of the world. 1Peter 1v18-20. See Rev 13v8, Titus 1v2, Rom 16v25,26. In Acts 26v5, Paul uses it to speak of the Jews knowledge of how Paul behaved before his conversion. In 2Peter 3v17, it speaks of the foreknowledge of future end-time events, through the knowledge of prophetic facts in the Scriptures.

"Oida." (Strong's NT:3608), and "eido." (Strong's NT:1492). Both mean to perceive and know intuitively, or to perceive with the physical senses, with sight, or perceive with the mind, or to know from observation. As we have seen, "ginosko" speaks of experimental growth of knowledge, and an active relationship whereas "oida" can suggest perceptive and intuitive knowledge, and can speak of a fullness of knowledge. e.g. Jn.8v55., "Ye have not known Him "ginosko," but I know him," "oida." See John 13v7, 14v7 and Mark 4v13 for a similar contrast. In Matt 7v23, "I never knew you," the aorist of "ginosko," means, "I have never at any point of time been in any relationship with you."

Compare "Epistamai." (Strong's NT:1987). To put the mind upon, comprehend, or be acquainted with, to know, understand. Peter's denial. Mark 14v68. Peter at the house of Cornelius. Acts 10v28. See Acts 15v7, 18v25, 19v15,25, 20v18, 22v19, 24v10, 26v26, Heb.11v8 etc.

Appendix VI: The Nine Gifts Of The Holy Spirit

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Introduction.

There is a tremendous need for the manifestation of Spiritual gifts in our day.

The Church is today facing the greatest challenge that it has ever known. We are seeing an alarming increase in sin and lawlessness of every kind. There is an amazing increase of Satanic counterfeit gifts all over the world, and in a short while we can expect those monsters of iniquity, Antichrist and the False Prophet, to emerge with a Satanic fullness of power. There is also the challenge of evangelising countries under the control of militant godless governments, for open intellectual argument and evangelism is forbidden in these countries. The only answer is the gifts that Elijah, Christ and His apostles possessed, miraculous protection and miraculous evangelism is the only answer in such situations.

How do the majority of Christian leaders respond to the challenge of these days?

Most of them hide the key of knowledge of spiritual gifts, by wilful omission, false tradition, sceptical and untrue exposition, and unbelieving example. Luke 11v52. They deprive many Christians of the mighty armoury of spiritual gifts by teaching that the gifts of the Spirit are not needed any more, in spite of the Scriptures stating the contrary. Some teach that the only spiritual gifts that we need now are the word of wisdom, word of knowledge and prophecy, which are explained away as the normal Christian ability to teach and preach. However, these kind of expositions are lacking in consistency and honesty, for one cannot say that spiritual gifts are not for today, and then

say that it is right and indeed obligatory to desire spiritual gifts, and in particular the higher gifts, and then explain away these higher gifts as the ability to teach and preach God's Word. Spiritual gifts cannot be explained away so easily as this. Spiritual gifts are God's acts in the world, and God gives us in the Scriptures the record of some of His acts and purposes in history, and we see that whenever the manifestations of God's power and purposes through the manifestation of spiritual gifts were lacking, there was invariably backsliding and apostasy. God has always manifested Himself in signs, wonders and miracles when His people have followed Him with all their heart.

Christ's ministry was a continuous manifestation of signs, wonders and miracles.

God earnestly desires to manifest the spiritual gifts that produce these signs, wonders and miracles, in His Church today. God intends that people should be astonished and caused to think upon spiritual things by the manifestation of His glory and presence, through signs, wonders and miracles, as they were through His ministry while He was on earth. Mark 2v12, 4v41, 6v51, 7v37, Luke 5v26, Acts 3v10,11. However, people are not intended to just be left in amazement and wonder, the wonders and miracles in Scripture, were a sign pointing the way to God, or to God's way. They are directing the watcher to Christ and His Father. Mark 6v14, John 2v11, Acts 8v6, 14v3, 19v11, Rom 15v19, Heb 2v4. These signs indicate the desire of God, the presence of God, the power of God, and confirm the good news of salvation in Christ. John 5v36, 7v21, 10v25,32,28, 14v11,12, 15v24, Matt 11v2,20. Miracles are the normal work of God, "He is fearful in praises, doing wonders." Exodus 15v11, Psalm 77v14, 136v4, Dan 4v2,3. God loves to do "wonderful works," "mighty works," and "miracles." Matt 11v20, Mark 6v14, Luke 10v13, Acts 2v11,22, 19v11, 1Cor 12v10,28. This is abundantly demonstrated throughout the Scriptures

Acts of divine power and gifts of revelation were given by God to fulfil His purposes.

God formed His creation by supernatural power. He guided, protected, and gave Abraham children by His miraculous power. Abraham's and Sarah's faith was strengthened by a Divine visitation. Gen 17v15-19, 18v1-15, Heb 11v11. God equipped Moses with signs and wonders to convince Pharaoh and the Israelites that God had sent him and his message was true. Exodus 3v12, 4v1-9, 7v9,10. God gave Gideon the signs of His presence and will. Judges 6v11-40, 7v9-14. Samuel gave Saul signs that God had appointed him to be king over Israel. 1Sam 10v1-9. The unknown prophet gave the sign that the worship of the golden calves of Jeroboam was a abomination to God. 1Kings 12v28, 13v1-5. Elijah called fire from heaven to show that the Lord was God. 1Kings 18v36-39. Indeed, the ministry of the prophets consisted of a continual manifestation of signs, wonders and miracles, through the gifts of power and revelation. It is a remarkable fact that on occasions, even angels gave signs to convince people of the truth of their words. Judges 6v21,22, 13v15-21, Luke 1v18-20,59-65, 2v12.

God gave so many signs to His people in the Old Testament, that the Jews expected this of any prophet.

Paul said, "The Jews require a sign," and the Jews asked Christ, "What sign shewest thou?" 1Cor 1v22,23, Matt 12v38, 16v1. Though the Lord would not pander to their unbelief by giving them their own personal signs that they demanded of God, He gave them a multitude of signs through healings and miracles. The apostle Paul tells us that signs and wonders were the means by which the Gentiles were convinced of the truth of his message. These signs and wonders were the normal spiritual equipment of an apostle, and Paul tells us that they were needed by every local church. Rom 15v18,19, 2Cor 12v12, 1Cor 12v31, 14v1. We are told in James 5v14,15, that the elders of local churches are to possess the spiritual power to pray for the sick and see them healed, so we should expect all the other ministries of Eph 4v11, apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers, to pray for the sick and see them healed. Obviously, some ministries are more powerful and specialised in their ministry to the sick, than others, but every New Testament leader and elder was expected to have a ministry towards the sick. Even deacons in the early Church did mighty works of healing. Acts 6v1-15, 8v5-8. Stephen and Philip.

Sadly, many Christians have an ingrained scepticism concerning God's spiritual gifts, and reject them.

In spite of the ministry of Christ and His early Church, many Christians say, "I don't believe in spiritual gifts. I don't need any gifts of power and revelation. I don't believe in signs, they are only demanded by an evil generation." It is true that the Lord Jesus refused to give the sensational sign demanded by the sceptics, but He manifested a multitude of Scriptural signs before the sceptics, that were more than sufficient to convince the sincere seeker. The sceptic does not need a sign, for they will explain away any sign that is given just as Christ's enemies did, they need to repent of their sins and accept Christ and His Word, and then they will accept the signs and wonders manifested through the spiritual gifts. The final defence of the sceptic confronted by an undeniable sign from God, is to say that it is a manifestation of Satan's power. Matt 12v22-32. However, signs and wonders do help a sincere person who is seeking the truth to make up their mind and follow Christ, and are the means of convincing many doubtful waverers. Christ appealed to the miracles and healings that He did as proof of His authority, and He promised the people more of them to help them to believe. John 5v20,35-37, 10v37,38, Matt 12v38-42. Do away with the signs and wonders in the Bible and all you have left are the accounts of human failure, sin and unbelief. Do away with signs and wonders for today and you impudently affirm that God is " The Great I Was," instead of "The Great I Am;"

but our God and Christ are the very same today in their compassion consecration, activities and abilities as they have always been. Heb 13v8.

Jesus said that people need God's miracles to bring them to a place of faith.

When Christ said in John 4v48, "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe," He was stating the fact that many people will not believe in the goodness of God, or the willingness of God to meet their need, without some supernatural evidence. Jesus, therefore, did many signs to encourage people to have faith in God for the healing of their souls and bodies, the greatest of these being the resurrection of Lazarus. John 11v42,45. When the Lord Jesus sent out the 12 apostles and the 70 disciples, He gave them power to do signs and wonders. Luke 9v1,2, 10v1-9, Mark 16v17,20, 2Cor 12v12, Rom 15v18-21. These signs are to encourage the faith of beholders, and spring out of the compassion and love of God for the sinful, sick and needy. God desires to openly manifest His presence by the things that He does, God does not intend that we should apprehend spiritual things, or the Holy Spirit's presence, by blind faith alone. God desires that His presence should be plainly seen, in fact, people are brought face to face with the invisible but living God, by the manifestation of spiritual gifts. The healing of the sick, the working of miracles, the secrets of the heart being made manifest, make it very plain that God is in the midst of His people. 1Cor 14v25, John 2v11,23, Acts 8v5-8, etc.. Even Simon the sorcerer was amazed at the manifestations of God's power through the gifts of the Spirit, in the ministry of Philip the deacon, and became a believer and many others with him.

Rejection of the Divine miraculous is a rejection of the Scriptures.

Those who say that we do not need the miraculous, for the Scripture alone are all that we needs to work for God, are in reality rejecting the Scriptures. The Old Testament prophets and Christ and His early Church needed the signs and wonders that the Scriptures reveal and deem essential for the proper fulfilment of God's purposes and will. Those who hide behind a false spirituality and say, "All I need is the Scripture," should remember that the Scripture expressly commands Christians to earnestly seek for spiritual gifts, and that much of Scripture is a record of the manifestation of these gifts. The Holy Scripture tells us that Christ desires to do greater works through His Church than He did while He was on earth. John 14v12. The Scripture tells us that Christians need spiritual gifts to serve Christ and meet the needs of this dark hour and that Christians can expect the manifestation of them right up to the great day of God's wrath. Acts 2v17-21. God wants to manifest His love and power to the world and He wants Christians to be channels of His saving and healing power. 1Cor 12v7. There is no such thing as an unsupernatural, non-miraculous Christianity in the New Testament, indeed the Old Testament only manifests a miracle working God. The present non-miraculous Christianity is yet another fruit of the sin and unbelief of the dark ages of the Church. The present unbelief and rejection of the gifts of the Holy Spirit by many Christians will mean that they will be spiritually unprepared for the sin and Satanic miraculous that will be manifested in great power at the end of this age.

The fact that God does signs and wonders does not mean that everybody will automatically repent of their sins and turn to God, even the very mightiest manifestations of power and love of God fail to win some people. The Lord Jesus censured certain cities because they did not repent even though He had done such mighty works there. Matt 11v20-24. Like many of the Scribes and Pharisees, many of the people had clearly seen God, but they did not want Him, they hated both Christ and His Father because their hearts were bound by a love of evil. John 15v21-25. This was why the Lord Jesus refused to give them some sensational sign to them, they had quite enough evidence to convince a sincere heart. The confirmation of the Gospel by signs, wonders and miracles is the final appeal of God to the soul, rejection of God and His truth when confirmed by signs, wonders and miracles, is the final act of spiritual suicide. John 15v21-25. In pioneer evangelism, and in fact every church, it is essential to see the invisible God being made visible by the things that He is doing through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Paul said to the Corinthians, "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." 2Cor 12v12. In 1Cor 2v4,5. Paul says, "my speech and my preaching of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Paul stated that the message of a crucified Saviour was confirmed by mighty signs and wonders and that it brought great fruit in the wicked city of Corinth. The gifts of the Holy Spirit make the Lord Jesus and the presence of God very real; so much so, that in the early Church, when unbelievers came into the meetings out of curiosity, or even with down-right hostility, they were forced to cry, "God is in the midst of you of a truth," because of the manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit. The same thing happens today where those same gifts of the Holy Spirit are manifested. The gifts of the Holy Spirit enable the presence and will of God to be manifested on earth. 2Cor 14v24,25.

The challenging counterfeit signs of Satan being manifested today, demand that the Church of Christ should manifest their blood-bought inheritance of mighty signs wonders and miracles. Spiritualists, Mormons, and many other false cults have the zeal and power of Satan, and they deceive many. Even as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, and Elymas withstood Paul, these evil workers challenge the experience of the Church of Christ. The Scripture warns us that we can expect further great manifestations of evil power in these last days. Matt 24v11,24, 2Thess 2v8-12. The only answer to the evil of the last days is the power of God. Intellectual argument alone has

never been a sufficient answer to the powers of darkness. The anointed preaching of the Word of God and the powerful manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, has always been God's answer to the powers of evil. New Testament Christianity was not, and has never been, mere intellectual gymnastics, it has always been God's truth confirmed by spiritual dynamics.

The vast majority of Churches and denominations do not desire to manifest the powers of God through signs, wonders and miracles, some are quite content to manifest the "pop" of hand-clapping, chorus singing, intellectual argument, or even sheer noise, instead of the power of God through the mighty gifts of power and revelation. Israel ended up in captivity in Assyria and Babylon, because of its sin and unbelief, they are quite unable to fulfil the wonderful purpose of God to be a blessing to the whole world. Much of Christ's Church is in captivity, chained and defeated by the world, the flesh and the Devil because of its sin and unbelief, and God cannot use it to fulfil His beautiful desires to bring salvation and healing to the world. Many, we fear, like the Scribes and Pharisees, will only oppose true New Testament Christianity, but some sincere hearts will accept their Pentecostal Christian heritage and fulfil the beautiful and wonderful purposes and desires of God. Gifts of power under the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ through the gifts of revelation, are the greatest evangelising force that the world can know, as the ministry of Christ and His early Church abundantly demonstrates. Nothing glorifies Christ and exalts His kingdom more than Christ manifesting His power and love through His Church and His spiritual gifts. We thank God that Church history proves that men of faith have ministered the saving and healing power of Christ to the sick and sinful, when the rest of the Church has been plunged in unbelief and spiritual gloom., e.g. Tertullian, Irenaeus, Bernard of Clairvaux, the Albigenses, the Waldenses, George Fox, John Wesley, John Welch, Dowie, Price, Branham, and many others. Let us follow their example and minister the love and power of the altogether lovely God of love, to this needy world.

The challenge of Christ's ministry and the experience of the New Testament ministries, is directed mainly at the more mature Christians and the leaders in Christ's Church, for God does not expect too much of spiritual babes. 1Cor 3v1,2, Heb 5v11-14, Luke 6v40. Christ's ministry and the New Testament teaches us that the ministries that God has set in the Church are never intended to function without the manifest power of God. Eph 4v11, 1Cor 12v28-31. Intellectualism is quite inadequate and barren without the power of God. Intellectual argument needs to be anointed with God's power and presence to do any good, they have to be anointed words like the words of Christ, He said, "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Jn.6v63. Some have mistaken oratory, earnestness and noise for the anointing of God, but those who live close to God can easily discern between the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the "strange fire" of humanistic endeavour. Lev 10v10.

The Lord Jesus commissioned every preacher He sent forth to work miracles, and every local church to be a centre of revival, salvation and healing, and every gift of the Holy Spirit to be operated there. Some say that this is too demanding, but the example that Christians should follow is the ideal one revealed in the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ and His early Church, and not any man-made substitute. I make no apology for the standard laid down in these pages, it is the standard laid down by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. No one should be a leader in Christ's Church, who is not prepared to accept the standard that Christ demanded for those He sent to teach and preach. To be a mere professional preacher without being a minister of God's life, means that a person is in for great condemnation when we meet the Lord. James 3v1. Preachers in the New Testament preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven and manifested the gifts of the Holy Spirit. 1Peter 1v12. We fail to read of one New Testament leader who did not manifest spiritual gifts. The Church of Christ was never intended to be a tower of Babylonian humanistic endeavour, Christ desires it to be a body energised with the power of God. It is imitation, not observation, of Christ and His Church that makes a person a New Testament Pentecostal Christian.

There will be no New Testament revival today unless Christians, and Christian leaders in particular, imitate Christ and His early Church by having a mighty life of communion with God and an earnest desire for full-salvation, holiness, and Christ's spiritual gifts. Some say that 1Cor 12v28-30. teaches that the manifestation of the gifts of power and revelation is mainly confined to the ministry gifts of Christ in Eph 4v8-11. However, Paul tells us in 1Cor 12v31 that all Christians are to covet the more powerful gifts of the Holy Spirit, and that in the local church the gifts will be manifested through the whole church as a body, i.e. one will manifest one gift and another Christian another gift, whereas the ministry gifts of Christ will experience a regular manifestation of the greater gifts through each individual. It is obvious that the different ministries will manifest certain gifts more than others, in fact one will be able to judge the ministry that Christ has given to a person by their manifestation of spiritual gifts. It is obvious that the more authority a person receives from God, the more they will manifest spiritual gifts, one cannot think of an apostle without thinking of the signs of an apostle, or a prophet without thinking of the gifts of revelation, of a New Testament evangelist without thinking of the gifts of healings. 2Cor 12v12, Rom 15v18,19. The spiritual gifts to a large extent made a person's ministry, and the greater the range and power of the gifts of the Spirit they possessed, the greater was their authority in God and their position in the Church. God says that apostles are first in authority, prophets second, teachers third, workers of miracles fourth, ministries of healing fifth, helps sixth, governments seventh, tongues interpreted for the church eighth. It is interesting to note that the administrative offices of helps and governments, probably the New Testament offices of deacon, come last in the New Testament Church and first in the modern Church.

It is a disaster when people are put in charge of churches who have no spiritual and supernatural ministry. A person who has no spiritual gifts should not oversee a Pentecostal church, for all the ministry gifts should exercise the spiritual gifts. The teachers of the early Church did not discuss technicalities, they led people into an experience of New Testament truth, not a mere intellectual knowledge of it. Like Paul, the teachers in the early Church taught the local churches to act as a body together, the gifts being manifested first by one and then by another to meet the challenges presented to them. The apostle Paul told the Corinthian church that God desired them to manifest the gifts of the Holy Spirit is love as a body. Obviously an apostle or prophet will have to manifest all the gifts in doing the work that God has called them to do, but in the local church, God desires the gifts to be shared among his people, it brings a real sense of inter-dependence, and reduces the possibility of pride, or the grave danger of individualism. The emphasis upon intellectual qualifications at the expense of spiritual qualifications has resulted in a dreadful spiritual death in most Christian denominations and a complete absence of the mighty manifestations of the Holy Spirit in most churches. John Wesley says in Vol.2, page 204 of his works: -

"The grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn, was not only that faith and holiness were well nigh lost, but that dry, formal, orthodox men, began to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves and to decry them all as either madness or imposture." End of quote.

The Scribes and Pharisees of Christ's day did not accept the fact that God had passed them by and chosen ordinary working men to be the channels of His omnipotence omniscience and love, but God will always choose the humble, spiritual and loving soul in preference to the self-sufficient and proud, wise, prudent and intellectual person. God resists the proud and gives His grace to the humble and meek, the first beatitude tells us that it is only those who come as humbly to God as a penniless beggar does for charity, who will receive the treasures of heaven. Humble yourself before God, submit yourself to His Word, be subordinate to the Lordship of Christ, and you will experience the good gifts of the Holy Spirit, the good gifts that God delights to give His children, the lovely gifts that Christ bought for us with His precious blood

W. H. Turner. December 16th. 1998. Reformatted and Edited again, November 23rd. 2000

Preface To The Fourth Edition.

I wrote the first edition of this book in the 1970's, and incorporated much of it into my larger book on the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit. As a result this book covers much of the ground of that book, but in a less technical, and more readable way. My wife says that she likes it, for this very reason, so I am putting out this new edition of this study. I hope and pray that it will prove to be a blessing to those who read and study it.

W. H. Turner January 28th. 2001.

Preface To The Fifth Edition.

In this fifth edition, I have improved the format and grammar, and rewritten some of the material. The need for the gifts of the Holy Spirit is greater than ever. The evil last days are upon us, and the morals of society have rapidly degenerated, just as the Scriptures foretold. God's gifts are God's answer to this wickedness. Let us take up the challenge, and take hold of God's promise, and earnestly and diligently seek Him for His gifts.

W. H. Turner. April 29th. 2005.

The Nine Gifts Of The Holy Spirit. 1Cor 12v7-11.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are called "demonstrations," 1Cor 2v4, "signs," "distributions," Heb 2v4, "operations," 1Cor 12v6, however, it is probably best to call them "spiritual gifts," or "manifestations of the Spirit," as Paul does in 1Cor 12v1,4,7,9,31, 14v1. In 1Cor 12v1 and 1Cor 14v1, the word translated "spiritual gifts" simply means "spirituals." However, the proof that these manifestations of the Spirit can be called "spiritual gifts" is found in 1Cor 12v4,9,31, for Paul uses "charismata," which means "gifts of grace." The following Scriptures also confirm our right to call these manifestations of the Holy Spirit by the name of spiritual gifts. Rom 12v6, Eph 4v8, 1Tim 4v14, 2Tim 1v6. So it is quite correct to call these "spirituals," "gifts of the Spirit," or "manifestations of the Spirit." The first shows us that "spirituals" are a gift of grace and we cannot earn them, and the second shows that these "spirituals" have their source in God the Holy Ghost. These nine gifts fall into three definite divisions, and these divisions help considerably in the study of the manifestations of the Spirit.

Three gifts can be called "gifts of revelation and information." They spring from God's omniscient love.

1) The manifestation of a word of knowledge.

- 2) **The manifestation of a word of wisdom.**
- 3) **The manifestation of discerning of spirits.**

Three gifts can be called "gifts of power and demonstration." They spring from God's omnipotent love.

- 4) **The manifestation of faith.**
- 5) **The manifestation of working of miracles.**
- 6) **The manifestation of gifts of healings.**

Three gifts can be called "gifts of inspiration and edification." They spring from God's omnipresent love.

- 7) **The manifestation of prophecy.**
- 8) **The manifestation of various kinds of tongues.**
- 9) **The manifestation of interpretation of tongues.**

The description that we have given to these three groups of gifts show the major characteristics of each group, obviously the description of one group can apply in a lesser measure to the other groups of gifts. The description that we have given shows the major characteristics and uses of these three groups of gifts. It is worth noting that Paul speaks of one Christian having several manifestations of the same gift in one meeting, whereas other gifts are spoken of in a singular to show us that we cannot expect them to be so common.

The co-ordination of Spiritual Gifts.

The apostle Paul divides the manifestations of the Spirit into nine separate divisions, nine gifts that can operate quite separately from each another. However, though these gifts can occur quite separately from one another, very often several gifts can be manifested at the same time. The gifts are various aspects of the love, power, wisdom and knowledge of God imparted to us by the Holy Spirit. These gifts complement and overlap each other in their ministries, sometimes we may need one gift, but at other times we may need several to meet our needs. Sometimes we may need the love and assurance that are given through the encouraging gifts of inspiration, at other times we may need the knowledge and wisdom imparted by the gifts of revelation, and at still other times we may need the mighty power of God manifested through the gifts of power to meet the needs put before us. Paul urges the Corinthians in 1Cor 11 to 14, to earnestly seek God so that all the gifts could be manifested in their Christian gatherings. It is not by chance that Paul discussed spiritual gifts immediately after his instruction on the Lord's supper, the manifestation of spiritual gifts was part and parcel of the communion service. God the Holy Spirit wants to directly meet the needs of Christ's flock as they are gathered together to remember the death of their Lord. A correct reading and exposition of God's Word will lead to a manifestation of spiritual gifts. If we fail to obey God's command in His Word to seek for His spiritual gifts, we shall find little blessing on our Christian gatherings. The Holy Spirit is Lord; He has come to rule, not to take a back seat. 2Cor 3v17,18. If we insist on keeping to our programs, we shall miss the things that God has for us, and very little will be accomplished. Men love to rule and take the place that belongs to Christ alone, Christ is the head of the Church, and the Church should follow His plans and designs, but the Church has too many human designs that God will never put His stamp of approval upon.

The reasons why Paul says, "Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy," in 1Cor 14v1 is because prophecy is particularly edifying to the Church, and it can be the channel of so many gifts. It can be a channel for words of wisdom and knowledge and reveal the presence of spiritual powers, and as a channel of words of wisdom it can reveal God's desire to manifest gifts of healings, working of miracles, and the gift of faith. The gift of prophecy comforts, encourages and edifies the Church, and as a channel of the word of wisdom it can co-ordinate the manifestation of spiritual gifts. Paul states in 1Cor 12, that the gifts are intended to operate in the local church like the various parts of the body operate together in perfect co-operation and co-ordination. What wonderful things we shall see when we begin to follow the Scripture pattern and see the Holy Spirit manifesting all His gifts in every local church, when this happens the churches will have no difficulty in getting the unconverted to become Christians. In the early Church multitudes of people became Christians when they heard the Gospel message and saw it confirmed by the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the same thing will happen today when those same gifts are manifested. God desires every church to be a centre of revival, salvation and healing, with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit operating in real power and love, a veritable heaven upon earth. This is the meaning of 1Cor 14v1, "Follow after love and desire spiritual gifts." Christians and Christian churches should radiate God's power and reflect God's love to the world. When a church works together in love and the gifts operate in perfect co-ordination together through the members of that church, it means that Christ can perform all that He desires to do through that church and His name is abundantly glorified.

The two main areas of spiritual gifts are defensive and offensive, they protect and they attack, they defend us from Satan's attacks, and they empower us to attack Satan. Usually one experiences the defensive manifestations of spiritual gifts first, and the attacking manifestations later. Indeed, in the Scriptures we read of many people who only experienced the defensive manifestations of the gifts, they never experienced the offensive manifestations of the gifts. In manifesting the gifts of the Holy Spirit we will find that God increases the power of the manifestations

as we grow in grace, and that God will develop the revelation gifts by using them in a defensive role in secret before they are manifested in public in an attack upon Satan's kingdom. The Lord Jesus did no miracles before His baptism at Jordan, but He certainly had many manifestations of the gifts of revelation during His life as a carpenter at Nazareth, as it is shown by His mother's words, "Whatever He saith unto you do it." John 2v5,11. Once a person is familiar with the operation of the gifts of revelation, the gifts of power can follow, for those who understand and have God's purposes revealed to them, can also receive God's gift of power to fulfil those purposes. It is essential for everyone who is seeking spiritual gifts to get as close to God in prayer as it is possible to do so. It is important to realise that it is not emotion that brings a manifestation of spiritual gifts but rather faith that is nourished and exercised in prayer. Prayer in tongues has a vital part to play in the manifestation of the other spiritual gifts, and this is why Paul said, "I speak with tongues more than ye all," and he thanked God for this means of spiritual edification. 1Cor 14v18. How necessary it is to build the character up in God and love through communion with God, we must earnestly desire "great grace" as well as "great power." We must desire spiritual gifts to bless others, i.e. the motive must be love for God and others and not self-aggrandisement.

1) The Word Of Wisdom.

This is the first gift mentioned in the list in 1Cor 12v8-10, and it is without doubt the most important of the nine spiritual gifts. Much confusion has arisen from a purely human explanation of the word of wisdom, so we will start our study of this gift by stating what it does not consist of.

1) It is not wisdom sanctified to the service of God.

No more than speaking with tongues is the consecration of linguistic ability to God, or the gifts of healings are the sanctified ministrations of a Christian doctor. It is not even natural wisdom augmented by divine blessing. The word of wisdom often carries with it prediction, a thing quite outside the realm or range of human wisdom. Human wisdom cannot reveal God's purposes for the future.

It is not the ability to guide and counsel people wisely.

All Christians who know Scriptures can do this in some measure, and those who have had a long walk with God through many years and many trials are especially able to give wise words of counsel and guidance. 2Cor 1v3-10. The apostle Paul does not say that a person is given a gift of wisdom, but rather a gift of a word of wisdom that is entirely supernatural. Usually the guidance for everyday affairs needs common-sense and Christian wisdom, if we need a word of wisdom, God can break into our lives and routines as He did into the lives of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Gideon, David, Elisha, the apostles and many other of God's people, both inside and outside the Scripture records.

2) It is not the ability to rightly interpret the Scriptures.

A word of wisdom is a supernatural process. For example; Daniel, Paul and Peter received the revelation of Christ's second coming by divine revelation, not by consecrated intellect and careful study. In Luke 10v20-24. Christ rejoiced that God's purposes had been revealed to the babes and hidden from the wise and prudent. The word of wisdom is not human wisdom, or even Christian wisdom; it is a fragment of divine wisdom. In 1Sam 9v15,27 the word of God was not an exposition of Scripture, it was a revelation of the will and purposes of God. Luke 11v49 with Matt 23v34-39, 1Thess 4v15.

A word of wisdom is not the ability to preach the Scriptures. All who have felt the power of God when they are preaching will know that they are carried beyond their human ability by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. However, this is not a manifestation of a word of wisdom, which is a revelation of previously unknown purposes of God, it is the exposition of known truth under divine blessing. This anointed teaching and preaching is a spiritual ministry, but it is not within the sphere of the word of wisdom. Christian exposition of known truth is in the sphere of the ministry gift of a teacher, and some Christians have a remarkable teaching ministry from God. The word of wisdom is in the realm of divine revelation, direction and prediction, and not in the realm of teaching and exposition. A teacher expounds the revealed words of wisdom in the Scriptures under the anointing of God, but if he manifests a word of wisdom, as he sometimes should, it is a previously unknown fragment of the mind and purposes of God.

The word of wisdom is not the guidance into Scriptural truth by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit guides all Christians into truth whether they are a Sunday School scholar or a Bible School lecturer. The word of wisdom works in a much more specialised sphere than the guiding into all truth, which is based upon interpretation and application of Biblical truth. The reception of Scriptures was by word of wisdom, its interpretation needs sanctified common sense, study and the breath of the Holy Spirit, and this will guide one into the knowledge of the truth. The apostle Paul told the Christians at Corinth to seek the greater gifts, and infers that they were very rare or limited in their operation in the Corinthian church, this shows that the gift of a word of wisdom was not the ability to interpret the Scriptures, which all Christians do in some measure. 1John 2v25-27, John 16v13.

To say that this mighty gift of a word of wisdom is only at work through teaching and preaching and is usually unknown or unobserved in its operation is complete nonsense, and is quite contrary to the whole of Scriptural revelation about this gift. This humanistic interpretation robs much of Christ's Church from desiring or obtaining the most important weapon in its spiritual armoury. It is a fact confirmed again and again by the Scriptures, that the prophets had visions of God and His great purposes in order to give them sufficient strength to perform the tremendous tasks before them. Because of the extreme pressure and great persecution they faced many of the prophets and some New Testament Christians experienced God's truths and spiritual realities by vision, an intellectual appreciation of these truths and realities was not sufficient, Some divine truths and spiritual realities can only be revealed to their full extent by the Holy Spirit manifesting His greater gifts. The Church needs men today who are transformed by the revelation of God and His purposes, men of heavenly vision and spiritual insight, such men make the truth of God live by their confirmation and demonstration of it by the gifts of power and revelation. We need teachers who not only rightly interpret the Scriptures, but above all we need teachers who can fulfil the Scriptures and manifest spiritual gifts, men who have visions of God and His purposes.

NB: A Word of Warning.

In this present dispensation there is no need for either prophet or priest to come between Christians and their God, we can all be personally led by the Holy Spirit, if we abide in Christ and walk in the Spirit, God will guide us. Rom 8v14, John 14v16-26, 16v7-15. We are told in Heb 8v8-13 that the new covenant does away with one person directing another in the will of God for them, for "they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me from the least unto the greatest." Heb 10v19-22, tells us that the blood of Christ has made it possible for every child of God to come right into the presence of God, and in Heb 4v14-16 all Christians are personally invited to come directly to the Father and Son for grace and mercy. To direct others in such things as marriage, or their work for God is quite unscriptural and very wrong in this dispensation, these things are between a person and their Saviour, as Peter found out in John 21v20-22, when he tried with genuine concern and love to find out Christ's plan for John. God can use prophecy to confirm guidance, or to reveal a person's crushing problems, or to reveal great dangers ahead, and if they are going out of God's way and into danger. In other words God can use one Christian, or a group of Christians, to deliver another Christian from danger in an emergency, but to direct them in life's everyday affairs is quite another matter altogether; each Christian has a personal responsibility to seek God for themselves for divine guidance. We see in Acts 21v4,10-13, that the Holy Spirit warned Paul "that he should not go up to Jerusalem," through the Christians at Tyre, at Caesarea the prophet Agabus, again warned Paul of the consequences of going up to Jerusalem. Paul ignored these warnings, and the warning that Christ had given to him personally many years before, see Acts 22v16-21, that the Jews would not listen to him, and so he got himself into circumstances quite out of the will of God, because his love for his own people and his desire to see them saved. Rom 10v1, 9v1-5. One is filled with admiration for a man who could say that he wished that he could be cut off from Christ if it meant that it would save his country-folk, but this beautiful love for his people led Paul out of God's will, so we can see that we have to watch even our strong loving desires, otherwise we can be led out of the will of God. The Church can experience direction from God, but great care should be taken when making important decisions, and personal direction from others should be treated with the greatest caution and never swallowed without question. The apostle John had Christ's purposes and desires for the seven churches in Asia revealed to him, and through him Christ reproved sin in these churches, however, Christ never told John to try to direct Christians in their private lives or their manner of work for him, this was a personal matter between Christ and themselves.

3) It is not a good administrative ability.

It is not the ability to lead or govern large meetings, conferences, etc., though some leaders of meetings sometimes experience a real word of wisdom from God. e.g. James. Acts 15v12-22,28. It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and us. Some unconverted worldly people are excellent in chairing meetings and have real administrative ability. The ability to administrate is a necessary ministry in the Church of Christ, and deacons without doubt fulfil the two ministry gifts of helps and governments spoken of in 1Cor 12v28. "Helps," Gr. "antilepssis," suggests, "a taking over," or "a laying hold of to support," and "administration." The word "governments," Gr. "kubernesis," means ability to steer and guide, like a ship's master or pilot. Acts 27v11. One could hardly think that Paul would omit a reference to the ministry of deacons in his list in 1Cor 12v28, as this was an important New Testament office, the ministries of "helps" and "governments," ideally describe the office and work of deacons.

4) The word of wisdom must not be confused with the normal gift of prophecy.

The word of wisdom contains either direction or prediction, whereas the normal gift of prophecy spoken of in 1Cor 12v10, does not. Any prophecy that contains either direction or a prediction of God's purposes, contains a word of wisdom, and what we usually call "prophecies" in the Old Testament were really predictions. The simple gift of prophecy edifies, exhorts and comforts; whereas the word of wisdom directs, predicts and reveals the purposes of God. 1Cor 14v3,23,25.

The seer of the Old Testament and the prophet spoken of in Eph 4v8-11, are both the same office, and both experience a regular ministry of the gifts of revelation. They can also manifest the simple gift of prophecy words of edification, exhortation, and comfort. For example David prophesied many times in his psalms to edify, exhort and comfort, but on other occasions he manifested the word of wisdom and revealed the mind and purposes of God. So we can see that the simple gift of prophecy is the same in the Old Testament and New Testament, the person who possessed it ministered words of comfort and edification. Those who continually manifested gifts of revelation had a prophetic office, whether they were an Old Testament or New Testament prophet. The person with a simple gift of prophecy may occasionally manifest a word of wisdom, but that does not make them a major prophet with a prophetic office, it is the continual manifestation of the gifts of revelation that proves a person has this office. Doubtless, the faithful exercise of the simple gift of prophecy will result in God entrusting a Christian with the exercise of the greater gifts of revelation. When Paul in 1Cor 14v1 puts prophecy at the head of the gifts that we should desire, "Desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy," he does so because prophecy edifies the Church, and because it can be a channel of the gifts of revelation. The simple gift of prophecy does not hold the pre-eminent place in the gifts; it is the prophecy that reveals the mind, purposes and knowledge of God, that is the most important gift. It is divine sovereignty, grace and wisdom that ordains major prophets and apostle, not human desire. Jer 1v4-10, Acts 9v15,16, Eph 4v8-11, 1Cor 12v28.

5) The word of wisdom is not intended to add to the Scriptures.

We read in Eph 2v20 and 3v5 that the Old Testament prophets, Christ and His New Testament apostles and prophets, have given us the Word of God. God has revealed His eternal truths and purposes to us in the Scriptures, those who say that they have a new revelation of truth that replaces, or adds to, the Scriptures, should be rejected. The next revelation of new truth will start with a new dispensation, at the start of the Millennial kingdom. God has revealed His new purposes for each age as the new age has begun. Certain moral truths are eternal, certain dispensational truths have an application within the age they are given. It is true that the Old Testament prophets prophesied truth for our dispensation but we read in 1Peter 1v10-12, that it puzzled them, until they were told that it was for our age.

After God had given the law to Moses, God did not expand the law through the prophets, He revealed His purposes to them in the light of their reaction to the law, e.g. Micah 6v8, "He hath shown thee, oh man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

After the Old Testament prophets, Christ and His apostles and prophets, had revealed New Testament truth, when God gave words of wisdom to the churches, it was to meet local circumstances or personal need, it was NOT to add to the truth of New Testament revelation. We see in Rev 22v19 what God thinks of those who add to, or take away from Scriptural truth. There are many today who are wolves in sheep's clothing; they try to make their false revelation replace the Scripture. They claim a new organisation, a new order and authority, new apostleship, new doctrine, and they deny Christ's deity, death and doctrines. Paul warns us that false teachers can use Christian phraseology, but they preach another Jesus, they are moved by another Spirit, and preach another Gospel, these are "deceitful workers," Satan's ministers making themselves out to be messengers of light and ministers of righteousness. 2Cor 11v3,4,13-15. All the truth we need for this dispensation is revealed to us in the Scriptures without any more being added; Christ and His apostles and prophets give us the only foundation upon which we can build as Christians. Eph 2v20, 3v5. Those who desire to manifest the word of wisdom will have to keep close to God and keep full of the Holy Spirit. Each person will not have the same power or authority in their manifestation of this gift, or for that matter any gift, a person's spiritual growth and authority given to them by God will decide the extent of a person's ministry, To receive direction for one's life is one thing, but to have the revelation of God's eternal purposes like the apostle Paul is something much greater.

The Word of Wisdom is the Greatest of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

a) Because nothing is so great, wonderful, or important as the revelation of the mind and purposes of God.

By words of wisdom we learn of God's plans to manifest the gifts of power. We are instructed, and informed of God's desires. We come into the secret place of the Most High to hear His secret purposes. God tells His children who seek Him, His secrets and plans. Gen 18v17-19, John 15v13-16, Matt 5v6,8. God gives to us His perfect wisdom, wisdom springing out of His omniscience, i.e. His unlimited knowledge God has given the Scriptures to us by this gift, it is the record of God's eternal purposes and His dealing with mankind in the light of these purposes. God has given these revelations of His purposes in the most magnificent and wonderful ways, by mighty vision, dream and spoken word, confirmed by sign and wonder, to stress the importance of the revelation given.

b) Because rejection of God's words of wisdom has always resulted in divine judgement.

Israel and Judah ended up in chains in captivity when they rejected the words of wisdom given through God's prophets. 2Chron 36v15-21. The people in the time of the Judges were oppressed because they would not obey God's purposes. The Jews killed their Messiah and about 30 years later they reaped the results of their folly, in 70 AD Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus and 1,100,000 people died, Christ predicted the results of their folly, and sobbed because His intentions to bless and protect them had failed because of their wickedness. Luke 19v41-44. In the time of the flood the people rejected God's purposes revealed by Enoch's and Noah's prophesying and preaching and so the flood destroyed them.

c) Because obedience to God's purposes has always caused God's saints to conquer.

The early Church conquered because their activities were directed by words of wisdom. No church or Christian fellowship can conquer where men rule instead of God; we have to be subordinate to the Lordship of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Definition.

A word of wisdom is a supernatural revelation given by the Holy Spirit of the mind and purposes of God. It is God's will, commands and plans revealed to man by the Holy Spirit. Through this gift the Holy Spirit has revealed divine truth, and He can still give divine guidance under all circumstances, and can reveal God's plans and purposes for individuals, communities, churches and nations.

Some Examples Of The Word Of Wisdom.

1) To reveal the eternal counsels and sovereign purposes of God and vital spiritual truths.

All the divine revelations in Scripture of the purposes of God came through this gift. 2Tim 3v14-17. The Greek word for inspiration means literally "God-breathed" in 2Tim 3v16. Christ said the Scriptures could not be broken; this was because they were breathed by God. John 10v35. See how often the phrase "Jehovah said unto Moses" occurs in the books that Moses wrote, he received truths from God by word of wisdom, and this gift is manifested in all the writings of the prophets. The "oracles of God" came through the manifestation of the word of wisdom. Acts 7v38, Rom 3v2, Heb 5v12. Christ was very angry with the religious leaders of His day because their false traditions had made the revealed words of God's wisdom of non-effect. Mark 7v8-13. The Bible claims inspiration, and substantiates its claims. Jer 1v9, 5v14, Ezek 1v3, Hos 1v1, Joel 1v1, Micah 1v1, Zeph 1v1, Haggai 1v1, Zech 1v1, Mal 1v1, 2Chron 15v1, Num 12v6-8, Exodus 4v12, Matt 5v18, 21v42, 22v29,31,32, 26v54, Mark 12v24, Luke 16v30,31, 4v4,8,10,17-21, 24v25-27,44,45, John 5v39, 10v35, 19v35, Rom 1v1,2, 1Cor 2v10-13, 1Cor 14v37, Gal 1v11,12, Eph 3v1-4, 1Thess 2v13, Rev 22v16-20, 2Tim 3v14-17. etc.

Words of wisdom can be divided into two main groups.

a) Truths and principles for living by, general commands.

God is very interested in how we live, both the law and Christ's teaching, were mainly directed at getting people to live holy and clean lives, i.e. to put love into action. The Scriptures reveal to us the nature and end of sin and contrast this with the glorious end of a life of love and holiness. Christ Jesus came to save us from the penalty and power of sin.

b) To reveal God's hidden purposes and His plan of the ages.

Certain purposes of God are not just for individuals, local circumstances, or even for nations, they are God's eternal purposes and sovereign plans for His whole creation, some of them are not even dependent upon men's reactions. These hidden purposes of God are called "mysteries," this does not mean "mysterious things," it means "secret purposes." These secret purposes of God are revealed unto His children. Eph 1v9,10, 3v3-11. Some of these purposes of God have been kept hidden from all, even the angels, since the foundation of the world. Matt 13v17-35,11, Luke 10v21-24, Rom 16v25,26, Col.1v26, 1Cor 15v51-53. Those who know these hidden truths have a responsibility to tell others. 1Cor 3v1,2, 4v1,2.

God's plan for the ages. Eph 1v21, 2v7, 3v11.

The Greek for "eternal purpose" in Eph 3v11., is "plan for the ages." God had a plan for all ages before He started His creation, an incredibly complex and wise plan. Every age up to the Great White Throne judgement has been a preparation for the ages of ages after that great judgement. During the preparatory ages, God is setting the free wills of His creatures and proving that love is the only thing that can make community life a blessing. At the great White Throne every mouth will be stopped, for God will show the perfect justice and wisdom of His dealings, and will

prove by past history His loving rule and the rule for love, mutual happiness in community life is quite impossible. The Bible tells us of the following ages, the angelic ages in heaven; the earth under angelic rule, which ended with the judgement of the earth after Satan's fall; the very short age of divine communion with man in Eden; the age of divine forbearance which ended with the flood; the age of human government in the light of the flood, which ended with Babel; the age of promise, started by the promise given to Abraham; the age of law; the present age of grace; the Millennial age of stern judgement, which ends with the Great White Throne judgement of all free-will creatures; this is followed by endless ages of ages, when God shows His children men and angels the everlasting joys reserved for them. After the captivity in Babylon a period started called the times of the Gentiles, this will continue right up to the establishment of Christ's Millennial kingdom. During this period God is allowing men's own failure to demonstrate the fact that no matter which person or nation rules, happiness is impossible without His loving rule and the rule of love.

The whole of God's great plan of the ages revolved around God's central purpose of creation, redemption in Christ, without which no creation would have been possible, Christ's death was fore-known and planned before the foundation of the world. Rev 13v8, Titus 1v2. We are also told of other hidden purposes of God as children of God, Mark 4v11, Matt 13v11, Luke 8v10, Rom 11v25, 16v25, 1Cor 2v7, 4v1, 13v2, 14v2, 15v51, Eph 1v9, 3v3,4,9, 6v19, Col 1v26,27, 2v2, 4v3, 1Tim 3v9,16, Rev 1v20, 10v7, 17v5,7. We are also told of Satan's purposes and plans. 2Thess 2v7-12, Rev 2v13,24, Isaiah 14v12-14. Most of Satan's children are deceived by their master, we are beloved children of God, and our Father does not deceive us, he tells us His hidden secrets. The Scriptures also reveal Satan's plan to ravage and destroy the earth, and how he will try to compel all the earth to worship him by brute force and violence, how different from the beautiful and lovely desires of the great God of love.

God told many of His Old Testament and New Testament saints of purposes of His which were hidden to other people, Enoch had Christ's second coming revealed to him, Jude v14; Abraham had the revelation of Christ's first coming Jn.8v56.; Daniel had the revelation of the first and second coming of Christ, the great judgement throne, and coming ruling world empires, Dan 9v20-27, 7v1-16. The apostle John and the apostle Paul received equally astounding revelations of the plans and purposes of God. Revelation all. 1Cor 15v51-53, 2Cor 12v1-4. These are but a few who experienced the revelation of God's plans and purposes. The wonderful thing is that we have been told these plans and purposes and will have a part in their fulfilment, and will enjoy during the ages of ages the wonderful plans of our heavenly Father, and the unsearchable riches of our dear Lord Jesus Christ. Eph 2v4-7, 3v8,14-21. Hallelujah!

2. To warn of future divine Judgement.

a) Noah was warned of the flood. Gen 6v18-22. The proofs that the flood was universal are:-

- 1) If it had been a local flood there would have been no need for an ark. Noah built a ship of almost 20,000 tons in weight, as large as some modern ocean liners, this was quite unnecessary for a local flood.
- 2) We are told in Gen 7v19,20, that the water covered all the high mountains.
- 3) We read in Gen 7v11,24 and 8v2, that the fountains of the deep played a part in the flood, this speaks of ocean depths.

The flood continued for one year, and it was seven months before Noah could venture out of the ark after grounding on Ararat. Gen 7v11 with 8v4,14. The Scriptures tell us that all men outside of the ark died, Gen 6v17, 7v21-23, Matt 24v37-39, Luke 17v26,27, 1Peter 3v20. Only a universal flood can fit the words of Peter in 2Pet.3v3-10., Peter says that the wicked will be destroyed by fire at Christ's coming, as the flood destroyed them in the time of Noah.

b) Abraham warned of the destruction of Sodom and the other cities of the plain. Gen 18v17-33, 19v12,13, by Jehovah the Son, angels perform the judgement, v13.

c) Elijah foretells Ahab's death. 1Kings 21v17-27. This frightens Ahab into a measure of repentance, but Micaiah confirms Elijah's prediction after further sin and rebellion against God by Ahab. 2Chron 18v1-34, 1Kings 22v1-39.

d) God told many prophets that He would judge Israel and Judah by captivity. 2Chron 36v15-21, Ezek 9v1-11, Isaiah 10v5-27. God used the cruel Assyrians and Chaldeans to perform His purpose of judgement.

e) Jesus warned Jerusalem of her coming holocaust, but to no avail. Luke 19v41-44, Matt 23v29-39. He also warned that Jerusalem will reject God's witnesses in favour of Antichrist and will again perish for it. Luke 21v20-24, Rev 17v15-18.

3) To give divine direction before, or during, natural catastrophe or national disaster.

a) Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams and averts disaster. Gen 41v1-44.

- b) God rewards the faithful great woman of Shunem by preserving her in famine, she is directed to leave the land while the famine lasts, she has her property restored after the famine by the king. 2Kings 4v8-17, 8v1-6. God rewards her for looking after Elisha.
- c) Agabus warns of a coming famine and the saints make plans to meet the coming trial. Acts 11v27-30, Famine in the Scriptures is often stated to be the result of judgement from God. 2Sam 21v1-14, 24v13.
- d) Paul warns of a storm by word of knowledge and guides the storm by word of wisdom. Acts 27v9-11,21-25,30-34,44. God can deliver us in time of accident.

4) To give divine direction and deliverance in time of persecution and danger.

- a) David is protected from Saul, "abide not in the hold." 1Sam 25v5,6.
- b) The three kings delivered from sure defeat when fighting Moab. 2Kings 3v4-27.
- c) The wise men, Mary and Christ directed from danger. Matt 2v12,13,19,20.
- d) Christ postpones His visit to Jerusalem, being warned of a plan to arrest Him, He goes up late to escape arrest; the soldiers which are sent to arrest Him when He starts preaching don't do it because of His mighty anointed preaching. John 7v1-10,44-53.
- e) Paul is warned to flee from Jerusalem just after his conversion. Acts 22v17-21.
- f) Jeremiah's guidance from God is rejected; the result is death for all. Jer 42 & 43.

5) To give divine defence in trial or persecution for Christ's sake.

Sometimes we can answer our foes by exposition of Scripture truth as Paul did in Acts 24v24-27, Col 4v6, 1Peter 3v13-18, or by giving our testimony as Paul did in Acts 22v1-24, 26v1-31, and sometimes our own wisdom can show us the way to answer as Paul did in Acts 23v6-10. However, in Luke 12v11,12 and 21v12-15, Christ tells us that in murderous persecution **WE MUST NOT PREMEDITATE WHAT TO ANSWER**, for the Holy Spirit will guide us what to say in the hour of trial, this is obviously not a premeditated clever answer but the impartation of divine wisdom. The writer has had the experience of saying things, which were not in his head, you listen to yourself answer people, or you receive a flash of divine illumination beyond your capacity or outside your knowledge to answer people with. This is obviously what happened to Peter in Acts 4v8-14, he was filled with the Holy Spirit and his answer and the divine wisdom imparted to Peter and John gave them a boldness and assurance that amazed the Sanhedrin and they could only threaten them, they were unable to answer them. v16-22, 5v17-42.

Probably Christ Himself had the same experience when He answered His opponents in Matt 21v23-27, when He was asked the source of His authority, and in Matt 22v15-22 when His foes tried to trap Him over the lawfulness of tribute to Caesar. However, His answer to the Scribes and Pharisees in Matt 22v23-33,41-46 was by Scriptural knowledge.

In Act .6v10, we read that Stephen had such wisdom and power given to him by God that his foes were unable to answer him, they had to bring false witnesses to lie about Stephen and pervert justice in an attempt to smear his character, however, so great was the presence of God with his faithful servant that Stephen's face was transfigured and like the face of an angel. In Acts 7, we see that Stephen's defence was Scriptural, his dynamic conclusion was the result of a remarkable fullness of the Holy Spirit. 7v55. When God told the Sanhedrin through Stephen, of His reaction to their rejection of His purposes, they killed Stephen, so we can see that when God gives His wisdom and power to us in persecution, there is not always deliverance, but there is always a mighty witness. Rev 2v13. Antipas my faithful martyr.

D. Gee tells in his book on spiritual gifts, of a Scot's covenanting lass, on her way to a secret meeting of Christians, who was accosted by dragoons who were after the Christians, they asked where she was going, she answered that she was going to hear her elder brother's will read; the dragoons told her that they hoped that she would receive a goodly portion. She was speaking of the blessings that come through the death of her elder brother, Christ, and His will was His Word and promises. Heb 2v11, 9v14-24. God can deliver us, but if He does not, He is still with us, and if our foes kill us, they only send us home to Father and heaven and our Saviour all the sooner. Death to the Christian is gain. Phil 21v24. Hallelujah.

6) To give divine direction in the work of God.

a) It can reveal and confirm a call from God to work for Him. Moses, Exodus 3v1-13; Gideon, Judges 7v1-11; Isaiah, Isaiah 6v8; Jeremiah, Jer 1v1-9; Paul, Acts 9v10-17, 13v1,2. It is only when God calls a person into His work and spiritually equips them that things really happen, for where God guides, He provides and equips. There are too many people in the ministry who have had no real call from God, and there is a tremendous emphasis upon human ability instead of God's divine call and equipment.

b) It can reveal God's strategic plans. Elijah, 1Kings 17v1, 18v1-46; Joshua, Joshua 5v13-6v5. It seemed folly, but it worked because God was in it.; Philip, Acts 8v26,29; Peter, Acts 10v1-48; Paul, Acts 13v2, 16v6-10; 3,000

missionaries, Acts 2v5.; The man born lame healed, many converts, Acts 4v4; Christ's ministry was directed by revelation, John 5v19,20. How we need to rely on God's plans and not on our own, to many people ask God to put His seal of approval on their plans.

NB: A word of wisdom can show us how to serve God, but it is not manifested to direct another person's walk with God, e.g. John 21v22. "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." In Acts 13v2, a word of wisdom confirmed what God had already told Paul and Barnabus, they received specific guidance direct from God, others confirmed it in a general and vague way. More direct and specific words of wisdom can be given by God in an emergency to preserve us from danger. Acts 20v22,23, 21v4,10-14.

c) It can reveal God's appointed shepherd, leader, or apostle. Saul, 1Sam 9v16; David, 1Sam 16v6-13; the twelve apostles, Luke 6v12-19; Paul, Acts 9v15,16.

d) It can reveal the solution to a church problem. Acts 15v13-29. However, this does not rule out discussion, "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us." 15v28.

e) To judge or correct sin or a wrong attitude so that God's work can prosper. The apostle Peter's sectarian views were corrected by a revelation of God's purposes for the Gentiles. Acts 10v9-22,30-48. Ananias and Sapphira are exposed and judged by God for their sin. Acts 5v1-11. The churches in Revelation are corrected and encouraged by Christ. Rev 2 and 3.

f) To reveal blessings that are to come. Abraham, Gen 12v1-7, 17v1-8; Jacob, Gen 25v23, 28v15; the promised blessing of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2v16-21 with Joel 2v28-32.

g) To help in home, family life, work or business. God loves to enter our everyday life and meet our needs for divine guidance and direction. 2Kings 4v1-7, Luke 5v1-11. God loves to comfort and assure His saints when they are troubled. Exodus 33v12-17, Joshua 1v1-9, Jer 1v4-10, Acts 23v11, 27v22-24, 2Cor 1v3-7, Rev 1v9-18.

f) To help God's people in time of war. One of the staggering things about the history of Israel is the way God helped the Israelites to defeat their foes by divine guidance and power. They were only victorious when they followed the divine purposes and plans, and the Church will only be victorious as it follows the divine purpose and plan.

Some special points to watch over words of wisdom.

a) The time factor in prediction, you may think a prediction or promise from God may be accomplished in days or weeks, when it will be fulfilled in years. 1Peter 1v10-12.

b) There will sometimes be a great discrepancy between circumstances as they appear and God's word of wisdom for the future, and we can experience a real fight of faith until God's promise is fulfilled. Luke 4v1-13, Eph 6v10-20, Heb 6v12, 10v32-39.

c) Unless God tells you to do something in a word of wisdom, wait until God fulfils His purposes, don't try to fulfil them yourself.

d) A prophecy of judgement may not come to pass because a person or persons repent and put things right with God or man, Jonah 3v9,10; likewise a person may not die who God has said will die, because of a new consecration and prevailing prayer by themselves or others. Is.38v1-22. Promised blessing may also be withheld by God because of sin. Psalm 95v8-11, Ezek 18v20-32, 2Cor 6v16 to 7v1.

e) God never intended that we should divorce the manifestation of spiritual gifts from abiding in Christ, keeping God's Word, and praying through, and this is particularly true of the word of wisdom, the greatest of the gifts, it is the love-filled, Christ-centred life, that will minister and fulfil God's purposes and blessing in the way that God intends. John 15v1-17, NB: v7,12,17. The prayer of faith, with or without tongues, usually precedes any powerful manifestation of this gift, or any other gift of any importance. Let us never divorce great grace from great power. Acts 4v33.

The Word Of Knowledge.

This is the second gift in the list in 1Cor 12v8-10, and though the word of wisdom is without question the greatest of the spiritual gifts, for it reveals God's plans and purposes, the word of knowledge comes close behind it in importance. Indeed, there is a similar close link between words of wisdom and words of knowledge, as there is between natural wisdom and knowledge. Sometimes we need a word of knowledge to make sense of a word of

wisdom, and we often need a word of wisdom to deal with the situation a word of knowledge reveals. A word of wisdom can tell us what to do, a word of knowledge tells us of a fact that we do not know, sometimes it may only need common-sense to act on the revelation of a word of knowledge, at other times we may need the wisdom of God through a word of wisdom.

The three gifts of revelation often occur together, particularly in the ministries of apostles and prophets, we consider them separately because God can and does manifest them separately, and this is particularly true in the local church, where the Lord gives one gift to one and another gift to another to bring a feeling of mutual dependence and love. 1Cor 12v12-31, NB: v25. The gifts of action rely on the gifts of revelation for information, the gifts of revelation rely on the gifts of power for action, and the gifts of inspiration build up character and spiritual strength for the manifestation of the other gifts. Let us now consider some important facts about a word of knowledge.

1) A word of knowledge is not any kind of natural ability or knowledge.

It is a fact that it is supernaturally given by the Holy Spirit of which the recipient has no knowledge, or very occasionally it may confirm as a fact something a child of God may have been told, felt or feared, as when David asked God if the men of Keilah would deliver him up to Saul, God told him they would. 1Sam 23v1-12. We also see that many of Ezekiel's visions were retrospective words of knowledge that revealed and confirmed the sin that had brought about captivity. God knows all the facts of heaven and earth, of time and space, from eternal past to eternal future, and He can reveal them to His children, as we need them. The wonder of God's omniscience overwhelmed David, he said, "such knowledge is too wonderful for me," Ps.139v9., his mind could not conceive such knowledge, but by faith and through spiritual gifts he had experienced glimpses of that awesome omniscience. The word of knowledge is totally miraculous, it is not the ability to analyse, explain, or think logically, it is a revelation of facts which the senses could not know by natural means, it is a small part of God's omniscience, i.e. God all-knowledge, revealed to us.

An intelligent, educated person is in no better position to receive a word of knowledge than a child or uneducated person, in fact reliance upon human ability positively hinders the manifestation of this gift, or in fact any spiritual gift. This is why the Lord Jesus chose uneducated fishermen, etc.; they had to rely on God to do the miraculous. Those with natural ability and natural knowledge tend to rely on it to do God's work, so God chose "babes and sucklings" and "unlearned men" instead of "the wise and prudent." Luke 10v21,22, Acts 4v13. God will not let any flesh glory in their abilities in His work. 1Cor 1v26-31. The apostle learned that it was not his great scholarship and intellectual ability that caused God to choose him, Paul learned to glory in his limitations, not his abilities, and so Christ's power rested upon him. 1Cor 12v5-10. God places no premium upon ignorance, but He does the very definitely object to self-reliance, and always resists the proud, whether they are ignorant or intellectual. Psalm 138v6, James 4v6, 1Peter 5v5.

2) A word of knowledge is not even a good knowledge of the Scriptures.

The word of knowledge is not the natural talent of a good and keen mind sanctified to the work of God, nor the accumulation of Scripture facts by study, it does not come by intellectual process, it is a result of spiritual revelation. It is not a spiritual revelation from the Scriptures; it is the revelation of some fact given directly from the Holy Spirit. A word of knowledge may come through diligent prayer and Bible study, as do all the greater gifts, but these are the means of grace whereby we tune ourselves into God, they are not the word of knowledge, it is a divine revelation direct from the Holy Spirit. A word of knowledge is not a good ministry of the Scriptures, or any kind of preaching and teaching ability, it is the revelation of an unknown fact from God, it is a miracle of revelation designed to demonstrate God's omniscience, care and love. It is not Christian scholarship manifested in anointed teaching and preaching, it is our heavenly Father showing us His divine mercy, by giving us a glimpse of His all-knowledge. Those who continually minister Christian truths and doctrines are set in the Church as teachers; those who continually reveal words of wisdom and knowledge are prophets. The teacher expounds known truth, the prophet, by a word of knowledge or a word of wisdom, reveals the mind and knowledge of God, to meet definite needs.

3) A word of knowledge is not given to pry into peoples lives.

This is not a gift for the critical or interfering busybody, as Paul points out in 1Cor 13, spiritual gifts are for those who want to minister God's love and blessing, they are for the long-suffering and kind. God dare not give this gift to a hard, critical, envious, scandalmonger. Even the Christian who is motivated by pure love and manifesting this gift, will not be able to pry into people's lives at will, the spiritual person can only minister this gift when the Holy Spirit desires them to. These gifts are not to condemn, they are given to minister divine life, love and blessing. When God reveals some great need in a person's life it can be to warn you, but it is nearly always so that you may help them and pray for them. A word of wisdom or word of knowledge often do not have to be revealed to others, they can be a personal word from God, or reveal a matter for urgent prayer.

4) Sometimes a person does not realise that they have received a word of knowledge.

Peter said that Christ was the Son of the living God, but it was not until Jesus told him that this was a revelation from God, that Peter realised that he had received a word of knowledge. Matt 16v16,17. Revelations given by words of knowledge can vary very considerably in their method of communication, they can consist of a burden put upon the heart by God, a simple word in the spirit from God, and even visions can vary from a vague and shadowy to a brilliant full colour vision. Those who desire to study the reception of spiritual gifts can read my other book about the gifts.

Definition: The word of knowledge is a supernatural revelation given by the Holy Spirit, that reveals to us facts that we need to know, but which we could not know other than by divine revelation. It includes all area of knowledge except that covered by the discerning of spirits, and the words of wisdom. It can tell us of events or things in the past, present, or future. (Here I disagree with H. Horton, and agree with A. Linford, that the word of knowledge can inform us of future events.)

Some Examples And Uses Of The Word Of Knowledge.

1) To warn of dangers ahead.

a) David delivered from Saul at Keilah through the revelation of the people's intentions, God told David that the inhabitants of Keilah would betray him even though he had delivered them from the Philistines. 1Sam 23v9-12.

b) Israel is delivered from Benhadad, because God reveals Benhadad's secret plans to Elisha the prophet. 2Kings 6v8-12.

c) The wise men, Mary and Joseph warned of Herod's intentions by dreams. Matt 2v12,13.

d) Paul warned of the danger at Jerusalem, and the storm. Acts 21v10-12, 27v10,11,21-26. Paul ignored the warning Christ gave him in Acts 22v17-21 and got in trouble.

e) Paul warns us of latter day iniquity and false doctrine. 1Tim 4v1-3, 2Tim 3v1.

God can warn us of danger ahead, and so deliver us from it, and this is a major use of the word of knowledge. However, sometimes we cannot avoid the circumstances and dangers ahead, they are in the path of duty, but we can be prepared for them by words of knowledge. If we refuse to listen to warnings from God through this gift of the Holy Spirit, we can expect real trouble and spiritual defeat as the following Scriptures reveal.

a) Christ was prepared for His death by words of wisdom and knowledge; however, the disciples were unwilling to accept His revelations and were defeated as a result. Matt 16v21-24, 17v22,23, 20v17-19 with Matt 16v55,56, Mark 16v9-14.

b) Christ warns Peter of his fall, however, Peter refused to accept the possibility of this and so fell. John 13v36-38, 18v25-27, Luke 22v31-34,54-62.

c) Christ tells Peter that he would die a martyr's death for Him, and this time Peter believed Him and was doubtless encouraged by the fact that he was going to be faithful to death. John 21v18,19, 2Peter 1v13,14. This took the strain and stress out of Peter in prison in Acts 12v5-7, he knew that he was to die an old man, and not a young man, he expected God to deliver him, when the faith of all the rest failed. v13-17. This lovely gift can take the strain and stress out of an unknown future, if we live close to God we can expect our heavenly Father to tell us of great dangers ahead, if He feels that it is necessary. However, God does and can hide great trials from us in His wisdom, He knows which is the best way to help us. God hid the death of the Shunammite's son from Elisha, Elisha had to find out by natural means, and sometimes this is the best for us too, we can rejoice that our lives are in the hands of the great God of love whose wisdom is absolutely perfect.

2) God can reveal a person's character, spiritual condition and thoughts to us. 1Cor 14v24,25.

We can never tell by a person's face, or outside demeanour, what they are like inside, however, God looks upon the heart and can tell us what is there if we need to know it. Without a word of knowledge people can deceive us. Even a mature, discerning and wise man like Samuel would have been deceived by the outside appearance of the sons of Jesse, David's brothers had such fine bodies and good-looking faces, that they would have deceived Samuel if God had not revealed their hearts and His choice. 1Sam 16v6,7.

a) God will not let us be deceived by evil people with a respectable veneer.

Ahijah had the deceit of Jeroboam's wife revealed to him. 1Kings 14v5,6. Christ had the slander of Judas revealed to Him; Judas was calling Christ "Lord" to His face and slandering Him behind His back. John 6v70,71. "Devil" means literally "slanderer." Simon the Pharisees critical thoughts were revealed to Christ and answered by Him. Luke 7v36-40. On another occasion the Pharisees invited Christ to a meal with the intent of trapping Christ, He answered their evil thoughts and frustrated their plan. Luke 14v1-6, Mark 2v5-8, Luke 5v22, Matt 22v15-22, NB: v18.

b) God can expose the sinner's heart. 1Cor 14v24,25.

The revelation of the secrets of a person's life has a profoundly moving effect upon a person, revelations of this kind brought David to repentance after his great sin, and the woman at the well to Christ. 2Sam 12v1-9, John 4v16-19,29. Nearly always this gift will be accompanied by the forgiving mercy of God, however, sometimes the sin is so serious that judgement is the only end. Elisha revealed Gehazi's dreadful sin and showed God's opinion of it; leprosy was God's judgement upon this sin. 2Kings 5v20-27. Peter revealed that Ananias and Sapphira had lied to the Holy Spirit, and they both died for it. It is sometimes necessary for God to expose the sin that is causing defeat to the people of God as He did in the case of the sin of Achan in Joshua 7v1-26. NB: v5,13,25. 36 men died because of Achan and his family.

Through the apostle John, Christ revealed the sin and sloth in the seven churches in Rev 2 & 3; only two churches were living as Christ intended them to. Here we must remember that God will never reveal sin that has been forgiven and is under the blood, He will only reveal unconfessed sin. Isaiah 44v22, Acts 3v19, Heb 8v12.

3) God can reveal people's situation and needs, to comfort them and inspire them to seek, or trust God.

a) It can reveal a seeking heart and its need.

Ananias had the revelation of Paul's conversion, blindness and earnest praying, and the address where Paul was staying, and so he was able to help Paul. Peter had the revelation of Cornelius and his friends earnest seeking after God, and an angel gave Cornelius the name and address of Peter and told Cornelius to seek Peter's help in finding God. Acts 10v1-48.

b) It can greatly encourage discouraged saints.

Elijah was told of 7,000 more who had stood true to God like himself. 1Kings 19v14-18. The women were told of their risen Christ. Matt 28v6. Paul was told that the Lord had many people in wicked Corinth who wanted God, without this word of knowledge Paul might have felt the position hopeless and moved on, as it was he won a great victory for his Lord. Acts 18v6-11. Josiah and Cyrus had their names revealed, and their works, over two hundred years before they were born, and it greatly encouraged them and the people of God to fulfil God's will. 1Kings 13v2, 2Kings 21v24-23v25, Isaiah 45v1-4.

c) It can reveal a broken heart and wounded spirit.

Some people need a healing of their memories, they have had great wounds in the past that have crippled them, and sometimes these wounds have made them physically ill, and they need Jesus to heal their wounded soul before they can be healed or feel the joy and blessing of God. Others have great problems and troubles of the present on their minds and need help with these. These wounds can be the wounds of sin as in the case of the woman of Samaria, but whatever the cause, Christ has come to heal the broken in heart, and the writer has seen Christ reveal peoples needs and meet them in a wonderful way. Isaiah 61v1-3, Luke 4v18,19, John 4v16-19,29. This is one of the most demanding but also one of the most precious uses of this lovely gift of the Holy Spirit.

d) It can reveal a sickness to inspire faith for healing or salvation.

Many people need a revelation from God to inspire their faith as Christ said in John 4v46-53. NB: v48. The writer has seen people saved and healed because they have seen or experienced a revelation from God through another. Christ revealed to Nathanael the facts about him sitting under a fig tree to inspire faith, and it did so, He can inspire people's faith in the same way today. John 1v48,49, Luke 13v12-16. The supernatural revelation of a person's sickness can greatly help their faith and often causes them to receive their healing, and causes many to accept Christ

Sometimes a revelation can reveal the cause of a sickness, or reveal the thing that is a hindrance to healing. Some people are ill because of the way that they have treated their wives or children, we should not forget Matt 18v5-7, others are full of a bitter spirit of unforgiveness. v35. God wants to save us and deliver us from the sin that ruins

our lives and health.

4) God can confirm a person's call to His work through the word of knowledge.

God can reveal to us a trustworthy and beautiful soul who will help us in God's work, as he did in the case of Nathanael, Andrew, Peter and John. John 1v37,40-42,46-51. Christ doubtless chose his twelve disciples by revelation through the word of knowledge and word of wisdom. Luke 6v12-16. Samuel confirmed his prophecy of God's call to Saul by a complicated word of knowledge. 1Sam 9v19, 10v1-16. Paul had his experience and call to God's work confirmed by Ananias who told him of his vision of Christ by a word of knowledge. Acts 9v17-25, 13v2.

5) God can reveal a real need for prayer through this gift.

This gift can greatly help the prayer warrior. Christ prayed earnestly for Peter and Peter came through in spite of his sin and failure. Mark 14v27-31,37,38,50. Paul was full of love for the Christians under his care, so God often showed him needs for prayer and the state of the churches by word of knowledge. This enabled Paul to minister to peoples needs though separated by great distance from them. Col 2v5, 1Cor 5v3. The apostle John also had the same experience in Rev 2 & 3.. Some prayer warriors have brought victory to churches and people again and again, they have received no well done from men, but what a reward and well done they will receive from the Lord Jesus. Many little old ladies in bonnets, and young ones too, have prayed through at great cost to themselves, out of pure love for others in real need, and they will receive a far greater reward than many eloquent loveless preachers. Matt 19v27-30. This is a precious ministry don't miss it whatever you do.

6) Through this gift God can reveal how material needs in His work can be met.

Christ guided His disciples by word of knowledge to the place where they would hold the Passover feast; God can reveal to us a place where Christians can meet. Mark 14v12-16. Christ told Peter how their financial needs could be met, a coin in the mouth of a fish. Matt 17v24,25. It also provided the means of transport that Scripture said the Christ would use to come into Jerusalem. Zech 9v9 with Mark 11v1-7. It also helped Saul when he lost his father's asses, and helped David to recover the property that had been stolen, and the people that had been taken captive by the Amalekites. 1Sam 10v1-8, 30v1-8,18,19.

7) God can deliver the Church from false prophecy, etc., by means of this gift.

The Holy Spirit can confirm that a person's interpretation or prophecy are "soulish" and in hope, and not inspired of the Holy Spirit. Jeremiah was aware that the false prophets had no anointing, and there was no witness within his heart to their prophecies. God told him that their prophecies were out of their minds and the result of their strong desires. Jer 23v16, Ezek 13v2. In 2Chron 18v1-34, 1Kings 22v1-40, we see a telling contrast between the prophets who wanted to gain favour by telling lies, and the man of God who told the truth at any cost. We are also told that on this occasion a lying evil spirit inspired the false prophets. v20,21.

8) This gift has an important place as a sign and wonder.

This gift is often used in Scripture in conjunction with words of wisdom and the discerning of spirits, in the declaration of God's purposes and the manifestation of vital spiritual truths and realities. It was an important part of the Old Testament prophet's armoury and often confirmed their message, and it can confirm the Gospel message. It can have a definite place as a sign and wonder, the revelation by a word of knowledge of Nebuchadnezzar's dream had the most tremendous effect on the Babylonian kingdom, and the revelation of the heart and sin of the woman of Samaria moved the Samaritans to God. Dan 2v21-26, John 4v28-42. A word of knowledge from God's all-knowledge can make all the difference between defeat and victory, and even if the revealed knowledge is only a small thing like a coin in a fishes mouth, or a person sitting under a fig tree, it can bring real blessing and meet very real needs. The Church universal needs this mighty weapon from Christ's armoury, and the Christian needs it in their daily life, home life, business and work life, as well as in evangelism, it brings a tremendous sense of the presence and care of God, and greatly glorifies the Lord Jesus.

The Discerning Of Spirits.

This is the third of the three gifts of revelation, however, it is seventh in the list in 1Cor 12v8-10. This gift has a much more limited use than the word of wisdom or the word of knowledge, however, it is a spiritual gift of very great use and importance and can be the ultimate in blessing to the child of God. This gift is an indispensable means of defence from Satan's attacks, and it enables the Church to attack Satan's kingdom and works. The discerning of spirits is entirely supernatural in operation; it is seeing the unseen spiritual realm by Divine revelation, it brings part of the unseen realm into visibility. It is the Holy Spirit enabling us to discern unseen spiritual things by supernatural means. The regularity of the manifestation of this gift varies very considerably with different Christians, some have a regular ministry of this gift, others have a less regular occurrence of this gift, and some we are sorry to say have

no desire for this precious gift and so they have no manifestations of the discerning of spirits. Let us now consider some important facts about the discerning of spirits.

1) It is not a critical spirit, or the ability to find fault in others.

This undesirable characteristic or "gift" is condemned in the Scriptures, "judge not, lest ye be not judged," as William's translates it, "Stop criticising others so that ye may not be criticised yourselves." Matt 7v1. This gift is a discerning of spirits, not a discerning of faults. This kind of critical spirit has led some through unspirituality, fear of the supernatural, false tradition, and prejudice to criticise the gift we are discussing.

2) It is not Christian discernment.

Though Christ told us not to have a critical spirit, He also told us to use Christian discernment and test people by the fruit of their lives, so that we might not be deceived by them. Matt 7v5-23. Jesus told us to "be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves, that means, we must use discernment with pure Christian love. Matt 10v16. We must be as wise as a serpent but not be as treacherous as one; we must be harmless as a dove. Some mature Christians, like my old grandmother, can spend fifteen minutes in a person's company and sum them up with great accuracy, however, this Christian discernment of character is not the gift of discerning of spirits. It is also not the Christian ability to understand spiritual truths; it is the discerning of spirits.

It is not the normal spiritual discernment that every Christian has as a result of having a born again quickened spirit. John 3v3-7, Eph 2v1. Spiritual things are discerned by the spirit that God gives to man, the unconverted natural man cannot comprehend the things of the Holy Spirit, but by the new birth the Christian can. 1Cor 2v9-16. As the Christian's spirit grows it is able to discern more and more, and it is more and more able to receive the revelations of the Holy Spirit. Luke 1v80, 2v42,52. However, the capacity to receive the gift of discerning of spirits is not the gift itself; nor is it the normal ability that every Christian possesses in some measure because of the new birth, to discern false Satanic inspiration, by the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. The anointing of the Holy Spirit, or lack of it, should also be discerned by born again Christians without the need for a gift of discerning of spirits. Doubtless some Christians have never developed the spiritual powers that the new birth has laid at their disposal, because they have accepted false tradition and resisted the workings and leadings of the Holy Spirit.

The apostle John tells us in John 2v26,27, that the anointing of the Holy Spirit will reveal the power behind the words of seductive false prophets, and the writer to the Hebrews tells us in Heb 5v13,14, that this ability to discern between good and evil grows with Christian maturity. By Christian discernment a Christian can sense or feel the presence of good or evil powers. By a discerning of spirits a Christian can see in vision the activities of good and evil powers, even at a distance, and in the past and future as well as the present. The discerning of spirits reveals by vision; the anointing of the Holy Spirit that accompanies normal Christian discernment reveals by feeling and inner witness, both have a very important place in the protection of the Church from Satan's wiles. The discerning of spirits is far more specific and illuminating than ordinary Christian discernment, and it has a far wider sphere of operation, and a greater delivering power when in operation.

4) It is not psychology or the study of the workings of the mind.

It is discerning of spirits, not the discerning of minds.

5) It is not to be confused with a word of knowledge.

The revelation of the secrets of people's hearts and minds is in the province of the word of knowledge; the revelation of the influence of good or evil spirits upon a person's mind is in the province of the discerning of spirits.

6) It is not communication with familiar spirits as in Spiritualism.

Spiritualism and associated manifestations such as divination, necromancy, sorcery, occult science, black magic, fortune telling, astrology, and witchcraft, are repeatedly condemned in the Scripture. Lev 19v31, 20v6, Deut 18v8-20, 2Kings 21v2,6, Exodus 22v18 with 1Sam 28v6,7 and 1Chron 10v20,21, Gal 5v19-21, 2Thess 2v9-12 with Rev 12v12 and 13v13,14, 1John 4v1-5, Rev 21v8, 22v15. God says that all those who do these things are "an abomination unto the Lord" and spiritually defiled. Deut 18v8-10, Lev 19v31. Manifestations of spiritual power do exist in Spiritualist meetings, but these are the Satanic counterfeit of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Spiritualist magicians of Egypt had the power given to them by evil spirits to create serpents, and do other miracles, the source of their power was Satanic and they withstood the gifts of the Holy Spirit through Moses. Exodus 7v10-12,20-22, 8v6,7,16-19 with 2Tim 3v8,9.

When the supposed manifestations of the dead occur, they are really familiar spirits impersonating the dead. When

King Saul sought the guidance of an impersonating familiar spirit through the witch of Endor, God executed him for it. 1Sam 28v6,7 with 1Chron 10v13,14. The apostle Paul brought judgement upon Elymas for his wickedness and sorcery. Acts 13v1-11. Since the death and resurrection of Christ the souls of the wicked are in Hades and Christ has control of the keys, and there is no communication between the unconverted dead and the living as Luke 16v25,26 makes quite clear. In the New testament dispensation the souls of the righteous dead are now in Heaven, and there is no record of any communication of the dead with the living other than at the transfiguration of Christ. Luke 9v28-36. We need to remember that this was over the redemption of mankind, and Elijah never died, he was translated by God, and that Moses had a special resurrection. Judev9. 2Kings 2v3-11.

Both the Old and New Testament reveal that God does not let the living communicate with the dead 2Sam 12v22,23, Eccles 9v5-10, Job 7v7-10,21, 20v5-9, Luke 16v19-31. The Spiritualist is deceived by Satan, and they are only allowed to see what Satan and the powers of darkness allow them to, Satan is a master of illusion and deception, he cleverly uses illusion and deception in order to deceive people. The clever display of the familiar spirit in 1Sam 28v8-21, deceived Saul completely, and Satan used these same powers of illusion to try to deceive the Lord Jesus. Luke 4v1-13, NB: v5,6. Saul's coming death on the following day was front-page news in Heaven, and Satan knew it. Samuel's prophecy. 1Sam 15v16-28. Saul's fears. 1Sam 20v30. All Heaven knew that God would execute Saul because he had consulted a familiar spirit. Lev 18v29, 19v31, 20v6, **1Chron 10v13,14**, Isaiah 8v19,20. The familiar spirit knew that God would keep his word, even if Saul did not realise it.

Spiritualists deny most of the major doctrines of Christianity, they deny the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures, the Deity, atonement, and resurrection of Christ, and His teaching about Heaven and Hell and eternal punishment. Spiritualists have themselves stated that Christianity and Spiritualism are the very antithesis of each other, and this is certainly true. Christians manifest their gifts by the power of the pure Holy Spirit, the dove; whereas the Scriptures teach that the powers of darkness are the source of the manifestations of counterfeit gifts through mediums. Satan, the roaring lion, destroys; Christ, the Lamb, and the Holy Spirit, the dove, save, heal and bless. Christians can experience the lovely gift of discerning of spirits, through Christ our Lamb, and the Holy Spirit, the gentle dove, who is our Comforter.

7) Discerning of spirits is not to take the place of Scriptural tests of character, or source of inspiration.

Christ said that Christians can and should test a person's source of inspiration, by the fruit of their life, and their doctrine, we need to remember that a person's doctrine is a fruit by which we can test people. Matt 7v15-23, 1Cor 12v3, Isaiah in Isaiah 8v19,20 tells us that if people do not speak according to the Word of God they have no light in them, they are only filled with darkness. The apostle John gives us another striking test in 1John 4v1-5, he says that we can test a person's source of inspiration by what they say about the Lord Jesus Christ, do they acknowledge that He is the Messiah who was the Creator, Redeemer and incarnate God of the Old Testament, if they confess this, they are "of God," if they do not they are "not of God." Micah 5v2, Isaiah 9v6,7, 7v14, Neh 9v6 and Psalm 102 v25-27 with John 1v3, Col 1v16,17, Heb 1v8-12, Isaiah 44v6, 41v4, 48v12 with Rev 1v8,17, 22v13, etc. All Christians can and should test false prophets by doctrine, but not all have the gift of discerning of spirits.

Definition.

The gift of discerning of spirits is the supernatural discerning ability given by the Holy Spirit to temporarily see into the spirit world. It can reveal a fragment or a wide range of activity in the spirit-world, either in the past, present or future. It brings the revelation of either good or evil spirits. It can reveal the presence of the angels of God and the ministrations, activities, and accomplishments of the Holy Spirit, and it can be the ultimate means of encouraging a child of God, when they are given visions of Christ, the Father and Heaven. 1Cor 12v1-4. The gift of discernings of spirits can also reveal the operation of Satanic forces, and can reveal the presence of demon-possessed or demon inspired people, or the demon powers oppressing a person. This gift reveals the unseen source of outward spiritual manifestations, by a vision into the unseen world, so it can deliver us from evil angelic deception. In Eph 6v11, Paul warns us against the "wiles," or rather "stratagems," of the Devil. The gift of discerning of spirits is a God-given gift that can protect individual Christians and churches from the wiles and stratagems of Satan, God can give us visions and reveal the presence and activities of the powers of evil.

Paul warns the Corinthians of Satan's subtle ways of beguiling them, and warns that Satan may come as an angel of light, with another Gospel, another Jesus, another Spirit; in other words Satan would use the same Christian phraseology, but it would mean something entirely different from normal Christian phraseology and doctrine, and all the false cults use this subtle method to deceive people. This gift can on occasions be used to protect us from this kind of seducing doctrinal spirit, or other seducing spirits that attack Christ's Church. Satan tries to make his evil wiles appear to be of God, as 2Cor 11v13-15 informs us, he changes the outward appearance, "meta schemata," but not the inner nature, so what may appear to be of God is sometimes the subtle workings of Satan. People can use the name of God and Jesus in praying for the sick, but because they are not born again Christians, they can be using Satan's power. It is not the use of the name of God or Jesus as a formula that guarantees a person's source of

inspiration, it is the conformity to the Scriptures over salvation, holiness and other vital Christian doctrines that prove a person's source of inspiration. Acts 8v13-23, 16v16-18, Gal 1v6-9, John 4v1-5. This gift can show us people who are under the influence of a seducing spirit and a potential menace to the Church of Christ. However, to manifest this gift and deal with evil spirits, a Christian must have a close walk with God and a real humility of mind and heart. Matt 17v1,16,21, Acts 19v11-17. We need God's equipment to deal with Satan's "lying wonders." 2Thess 2v7-12. We need spiritual gifts just as much as the early Church did.

Some have thought that the discerning of spirits covers the area of human deception and pretension, and the workings of the human mind, however, though man has the ability to communicate with God through the spirit God has given him, Paul is obviously not speaking in this capacity, but rather the spirit beings which cannot be discerned by natural means.

Some Examples and Uses of the Gift of Discerning of Spirits.

1) This gift can reveal if Satan or demon power is the cause of sickness.

a) The Bible tells us that sickness is primarily caused by the loss of the tree of life because of Adam's sin. Gen 2v9,16,17, 3v1-24, Ezek 47v7-12, Rom 5v12-14, Rev 22v2, 2v7. Adam's fall brought sickness and death upon mankind.

b) The Bible tells us that sometimes disease and sickness is caused by demons.

Evil spirits are said to be the cause of some sickness, blindness, dumbness, madness and epilepsy. Matt 4v23,24, 8v28-34, 9v32-34, 12v22-24, 15v21-28, 17v14-21 with Mark 9v23. We read in the Scriptures that Satan takes advantage of the fall of man and oppresses mankind with sickness. Christ came to deliver mankind from Satan's power and malice and to destroy these evil works. Acts 10v38, John 8v36, 1John 3v8, Luke 4v17-21, 13v10-17, Heb 13v8.

However, we must remember that not all sickness is caused by Satan or demons.

In Matt 4v23,24 ordinary sickness is clearly distinguished from demon-possession. Sickness can be the result of natural ageing, neglect of the body, heredity, accident, war, poisoning, infection, etc.; in other words it can be due to natural causes as well as Satan. Epilepsy, mental illness, and nervous breakdown, are not always due to demon-oppression, or demon-possession, these sicknesses can be the result of grief, accident, injury, old age, overwork, and other natural causes. The Bible tells us that some lunacy can be caused by demon powers; however, the Bible also distinguishes between those who are lunatic through natural causes and those who are ill or lunatic through demon possession. Matt 17v15-18, 4v23,24.

Evil spirits have other activities besides causing illness, they try to cause disease of the soul as well as the body, indeed, disease of the soul is their main aim and their most dangerous work. Matt 4v1-12, 2Cor 4v4. Demons manifest themselves as unclean spirits, lying spirits, seducing spirits, familiar spirits, political spirits, religious spirits, as well as spirits of infirmity that cause physical illness. Mark 1v23,24, 2Chron 18v22, 1Tim 4v1-3, Lev 19v31, 10v6, Deut 18v10-12, Dan 10v12-14,20,21, Eph 6v11-13, 2v1,2, John 8v33-47, Matt 15v1-14, Rom 1v19-23.

c) The need for spiritual honesty and spiritual equipment when dealing with demon powers.

We need to remember that it is an abomination to God to make a person think that they have a demon when they have not. Some people who are praying for the sick say a person has a demon, just to cover up their ignorance of the true cause. This kind of thing can cause real agony of mind in a person who is suffering from some quite natural cause of sickness and is neither demon-possessed nor demon-oppressed. Particular care has to be taken with people who may be nervous, run-down, unable to cope with life, or suffering from some mental illness due to brain damage or weakness of the body.

A Christian praying for the sick needs to be spiritually equipped to discern whether a person is suffering sickness as a result of demon oppression, demon possession, or natural illness. It is also very necessary to distinguish between sickness, which is the result of demon oppression from outside the body and demon possession from within the body. The best Christian may sometimes suffer sickness as a result of demon oppression. Job 2v4-7, Luke 13v11-16. To hurt people by saying that they have a demon, when they have no such thing, is very wrong, and for this kind of thing we shall have to answer to God.

If a Christian has real power with God it will cause demons to manifest themselves if they are in a person, the demon speaking to the person praying for the possessed one either in the spiritual realm, directly to the mind and

spirit, or openly to all through the mouth of the possessed one. Very often a person praying for a demon-possessed person, or demon-oppressed person, will be able to deal with the demon without anybody knowing about it. The revelation of the demon influence and the removal of that demon influence, take place through silent prayer in the heart of the person praying for the sick, without anybody else knowing it, or anybody being hurt or disturbed. At other times demons will openly manifest themselves in public and so they will have to be dealt with openly. Remember that Christ never demanded faith from a person who was mentally sick, or out of their senses because of the oppression or possession of demons. If we walk with the Lord He will give us the power to discern and deal with demons who are causing sickness and opposing the work of God. However, as Mark 9v14-18 makes clear, to deal with some very wicked spirits needs real faith and much prayer.

Some people place too much emphasis on demons when dealing with sickness, we should not always be talking about demons, we should be positive and talk about God. Whatever you do don't suffer from demonitis, don't be looking for demons in everything, or blame everything upon demons, there can be other causes of sickness, and very often sickness can be due to our own actions and foolishness. We also need to remember that Christ cast out demons with His word, not by the laying on of His hands this was probably because demons can be extremely violent. On occasions He asked the name or names of the demons, on other occasions He cast them out without asking them their names, the Holy Spirit will guide us as He did the Lord Jesus if we let Him.

d) It is a sin to tell Christians that they have an evil spirit in them when they are sick, or experiencing stress.

A Christian may be tempted by Satan, and some may give way to seducing spirits in certain areas of their lives, as the Corinthians did. This is, of course, very deplorable and dangerous and can lead to spiritual apostasy, but we must emphatically state that a Christian who is born of the Holy Spirit and washed in the blood of Christ, cannot be possessed by Satan, for Christ Himself promised that this was impossible. Luke 11v9-13, 1John 5v18. Like Peter a Christian may be inspired by Satan to say something that is not right, Matt 16v13-27, NB: v22, or even to temporarily backslide under persecution like Peter in Matt 26v69-75, because of Satanic oppression, but it is quite wicked and wrong to say that they get filled with an evil spirit. The Lord Jesus told us that a Christian cannot receive an evil spirit; they can only receive the clean and pure Holy Spirit. Luke 11v11-13. The apostate Christian who has lost all faith and hates God and righteousness may become demon-possessed, but not the Christian who is walking with God. 1Jn.5v18. It is the empty Christ-less life that gets filled with evil spirits. Matt 12v22-32, Mark 3v22-30, Matt 12v43-45. Those who said that Jesus had an evil spirit were in danger of eternal damnation, and those who say Christians are filled with evil spirits are heading for severe judgement. It is quite wicked to pretend that one has this gift and go around casting demons out of everybody including good Christians. Though I have often seen demon powers attacking Christians, I have never seen a demon in a Christian, nor do I ever expect to.

2) It can reveal a Satanic oppression of the mind.

The first place that Satan attacks in the Christian is the mind, the discerning of spirits can reveal Satan's attacks on the minds of Christians and so bring deliverance and blessing to them. We need to remember that Satan viciously attacked Christ in His thoughts, Satan nagged and derided Him and tried to destroy His faith and character, and deter Him from His mission. It is not a sin to be tempted by Satan; victory over His attacks makes us stronger Christians. Satan often plays upon a Christian's limitations, and tells them "You will never do any good," or "You will never do anything for Jesus," or "You will never learn the Scriptures." The writer has seen Christians helped again and again through the revelations of Satanic attacks on their minds and the Holy Spirits ministry by word of knowledge etc. Sometimes it reveals a Christian who has given way to a seducing spirit and is living in sin, or their mind and thought life is perverted and their doctrine corrupted as a result. The Church of Christ cannot afford to be without this precious ministry.

3) It can reveal a servant of Satan and the power behind Satanic miracles.

The Scriptures warn us that in the last days there will be a great deal of demon activity through false prophets and so we shall need the gift of discerning of spirits even more than we do now. Matt 24v4,5,22-26, 2Thess 2v4-12, Rev 13v11-15, 16v13,14. As we have seen before false prophets can be tested by their life and doctrine, Matt 7v15-23, 1John 4v1-9, but sometimes you need to know the spirit moving a person before you can know their lives or doctrine. Sometimes false prophets are so crafty that they hide their true doctrine, but the Holy Spirit can reveal the evil spirit that is with them and so protect us from them. Acts 16v16-18. One of the major obstacles that the early Church had to face was servants of Satan masquerading as servants of God. Acts 8v9-23, 13v6-12, 16v16-18, 19v17-20. When Antichrist and the False Prophet arise the Christian Church will have to face the greatest challenge it has ever known. I believe that God is trying to prepare His Church for these days.

4) It can guard the spiritual life of a Christian or a Church.

a) It can reveal Satan's attempts to corrupt and hinder God's work.

Satan tries to infiltrate churches with His children, or corrupt churches from within; he tries to bring in unscriptural religion and low standards. He tries to divide the churches by party spirit and bigotry. Acts 5v3,4, 2Cor 11v3,4,13-15, Eph 6v11. The apostle John received the revelation of Satan's activities in the seven churches in Asia and so he was able to warn the churches. Rev 2 and 3. Paul warns us of the activities of evil spirits in these last days and tells us to take heed. 1Tim 4v1-7, 2Peter 2v1-4. Peter had a revelation from God, and then shortly after he had one from Satan, Christ through the Holy Spirit perceived the source of both. Matt 16v22,23. To protect the church and ourselves we often need the same experience. The Holy Spirit can preserve us from evil by revealing the source of a doctrine, revelation, statement or action within a church.

By the discerning of spirits and a word of knowledge the Holy Spirit can reveal the source of a struggle for power in a church and the strategy behind it. 1Cor 1v10-13, 3v1-4. The Devil loves to have the carnal in control of a church or a denomination, and central government is Satan's delight, because he can control so many people with a few unspiritual or carnal people. He has only to corrupt a few people to influence a great number of people.

b) It can reveal the power behind persecution, blasphemy and slander.

Paul's thorn in the flesh was a messenger of Satan, i.e. an angel of Satan, which stirred up persecution and trouble for Paul wherever he went. 2Cor 12v9, Gal 6v17, 2Cor 11v23-12v12. Christ explained that the persecution that He endured was from Satan. Mark 3v22-30, John 8v44, 2Chron 18v22. We can be prepared for persecution before it happens by the revelation of the activities of evil spirits stirring up trouble against us.

c) It can check manifestations that occur in meetings.

The wise leader will be very careful when strangers manifest spiritual gifts in meetings, for Satan can send in fanatics, Spiritualists, or people speaking in known languages to deceive. There are also the arrogant who are determined to manifest tongues and other spiritual gifts whether the Holy Spirit moves them or not, by word of knowledge and discerning of spirits this abuse can be discerned.

We also have to be careful that we don't miss the moving of God's Holy Spirit by spiritual lethargy, deafness and insensibility. Open Satanic manifestations through Satan's children do not occur very often in Christian meetings, though they have occasionally occurred in big public meetings. We are more likely to get into trouble by failing to discern a genuine move of the Holy Spirit, as the late Donald Gee says on page 51 of his book "Concerning Spiritual Gifts: -

"Much harm has been done, and the work of God grievously hindered, by unspiritual or prejudiced people judging and condemning a real work of God because it did not conform to their personal standards of just how the Almighty should manifest His power."

Revivals have been hindered by ministers and others who objected to the strong workings by the Spirit of God upon the emotions, and this has hastily been put down as "false excitement," "hysteria," etc. Note an experience of John Wesley's taken from his Journal under the date of Dec. 24th., 1739: "Toward morning, one of them was overwhelmed with joy and love, and could not help showing it by strong cries and tears. At this another was much displeased, saying, 'It is only nature, imagination, and animal spirits.' O thou jealous God, law not this sin to her charge; and let us not be wise above what is written." Wesley had need of that prayer today for some we have met. ---- Those who pretend to pass judgement in spiritual matters must be prepared to show their credentials of personal spiritual experience. Unfortunately a great many people condemn wholesale manifestations and experiences connected with the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts who have practically no personal experience of either. We bluntly ask. Are they in a position to judge? Both the New Testament and common reason agree in giving a negative reply."

We have to be very careful lest we hinder the workings of the Holy Spirit by unscriptural tradition, prejudice, unbelief, fear of the supernatural, and a determination to run to time or the plan or order that we have previously arranged. We need above all things to discern the plans and movings of the Holy Spirit.

d) It can deliver the church from deadly persecution.

The apostle Paul was converted by a vision of Christ as he was travelling to Damascus to persecute the Christians there. The vision of the risen Christ accomplished what augment and even miracles could not accomplish, it brought Saul to immediate repentance. Acts 9v1-25. This is an unusual way for people to be converted, but it is certainly by far the most powerful way that God can speak to the soul of man.

e) The discerning of spirits can be the ultimate in encouragement to the Christian.

It can reveal God our heavenly Father, the Lord Jesus, and good angels and this can have the most tremendous effect on a person's life, it always transformed the ministries of the prophets and New Testament apostles, indeed it was the visions of God that made the Old Testament prophets what they were. Exodus 3v1-6, Num 22v22-32, Judges 13v3,8-21, 1Kings 22v19, 2Kings.6v17, Isaiah 6v1-13, Ezek 1v1-28, Luke 1v10-38, Matt 28v2-7, Acts 7v55, 12v7-10. How this gift inspires to new heights of service and new holiness of life, and how valuable it is in persecution. Ezek 33v18-23, Luke 9v27-36, Rev 1v9-18. What a comfort and assurance this gift can bring! It makes the unseen world real and vivid and makes the Bible come alive. For those who have a difficult task to do for God it is almost indispensable, for this gift can give us the strength to do the will of God even in the most difficult and impossible situations. Luke 22v41-46, Acts 27v21-26. Paul suffered the most consistent murderous persecution, five times he received 39 stripes, three times he was beaten with rods, and he suffered a multitude of other sufferings; what was it that kept him going? A vision of the glorified Christ on the Damascus road, another vision of Christ at Jerusalem, a vision of the glories of Heaven, and other wonderful spiritual experiences of his Lord's presence and power. Acts 9v3-6, 22v17-21, 2Cor 11v16 to12v7, NB: 12v4. Paul experienced the ultimate in Christian encouragement, he saw his Lord, and this vision lived with him through the tremendous persecution he suffered down through his life.

We can see that the gift of discerning of spirits varies a great deal in the way it is manifested, it is one thing to have a simple revelation of a demon, it is quite another to see the Lord upon His throne and hear direct commands from Him, this is the ultimate in Christian experience.

All the realms of knowledge come within the scope of these three gifts of revelation, the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge and the discerning of spirits. These three gifts of revelation have brought to us all the revelations of God found in the Scriptures; the book of Revelation is a result of the continuous manifestation of these three mighty gifts. What power they possess. What a blessing they can be. Beloved, let us earnestly desire these lovely spiritual gifts. These three gifts guide the gifts of power in their ministrations, and provide the Church of Christ with the wisdom and knowledge to attack the evil works of Satan, without them the Church is comparatively powerless and quite unable to perform the works that its Lord desires it to. Beloved earnestly desire spiritual gifts, so that Christ's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The Three Gifts Of Power And Demonstration.

Paul says that these three manifestations of the Holy Spirit are faith, gifts of healings, and workings of miracles.

1) These three gifts give the Church the power to fulfil its New Testament evangelistic commission.

The New Testament commission included the command to heal the sick in body and mind as well as the command to preach the Gospel. These three gifts are the active manifestations of divine love and power; they are the gifts of deliverance and power. The Lord Jesus and His early Church experienced a continual manifestation of these three gifts of the Holy Spirit, they needed them and so do we. These gifts inspire faith and godly fear by a revelation of God's power, love, justice and wisdom, and cause people to glorify God. How can we fulfil the New Testament evangelistic commission unless we possess the gifts that Christ considered indispensable for Himself and His Church?

2) God's sovereign acts and the gifts of power.

Some operations of God's power are outside the operations of the power gifts, they are not channelled through men, they are God's sovereign dealings with His creation. God can work without any person being the channel or recipient of His power. We think particularly of God's purposes in creation and His judgements in history, God's judgements upon nations have taken place without any record in Scripture, or any prophet to foretell them, we will learn of them in glory. However, in this Church age God desires His Church to go to every nation and preach the Gospel and confirm the Gospel by signs, wonders and miracles. Though God still deals directly with nations and people, God has in this age of grace given the responsibility of manifesting His power and love to His Church.

3) The tremendous contrast between Satan's counterfeit gifts and the Holy Spirit's genuine pure gifts.

Satan tries to counterfeit the gifts of God the Holy Spirit in an attempt to deceive people and damn their souls. The Holy Spirit's gifts are a blessing to the channel and recipient, but Satan's gifts are a danger to, and spiritually defile, both the channel and the recipients. It is very dangerous to have dealings with a roaring lion whose only aim is to devour and destroy, and his masquerades as an angel of light are only to further this evil aim. We have the self-sacrificial Lamb of God and the gentle dove, the Holy Spirit, to guide and empower us, if we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and born-again and filled with the Holy Spirit. Those who say that the gifts manifested by

Christians redeemed by the blood of Christ, are Satanic, have a great deal to answer for. Christ said that those who attributed the works of the pure Holy Spirit, the dove, to the manifestations of Satan, the roaring unclean lion, were committing a very grave sin, and putting themselves in the gravest spiritual danger, Mark 3v22-30, Matt 12v22-32,43-45. It is a staggering fact that demons said Christ's authority and power was from God, and the religious leaders said it was from Satan, and went on to eternal judgement. John 15v18-25, 8v24. Some today scoff, ridicule, oppose and blunder on where even wicked angels fear to tread.

4) The three gifts of power are all manifested by a supernaturally increased faith.

"The faith of God" spoken of in Mark 11v22 seems to speak of the faith that is given by the Holy Spirit to manifest the gifts of power. Christ was encouraging the apostles to have faith and expectancy that would enable the anointing of the Holy Spirit to produce a miracle faith for the gifts of power. In the Scriptures we read of people having a special filling of the Holy Spirit to manifest spiritual gifts. Exodus 28v3, 31v3, 35v31,35, Luke 1v41,67, Acts 2v4, 4v8,31, 9v17, 13v9,52, 5v18. With all the gifts, and particularly the gifts of power, there is a deepening of faith by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, all of them are operations of the power of God to perform miracles. Because of this divinely increased faith Christians can manifest far greater spiritual power over Satan's false prophets, as the ministry of Moses, Elijah, Philip, the apostles, and our Lord's ministry demonstrates.

The Three Spheres of Operation of the Power Gifts.

As we consider the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we realise that the gifts of revelation and inspiration fall into easily recognisable departments and their spheres of operation are easily distinguishable from each other. However, as we come to the gifts of power we have to think more carefully about the sphere of operation of each gift, and we have to give particular thought to which areas the workings of miracles and the gift of faith cover. The important thing, of course, is to have the gifts of power in operation, for possession of the gifts of power is far more important than the correct definition of them, as C.L. Parker says in his book "Covert Earnestly:" "It is not an absolute correct definition of each gift that is of first importance; it is possession and use that is vital. It does not matter whether Lazarus came out of the tomb by a gift of healing, or a miracle, or a word of faith. What does matter is that he came out! The mourner's did not try to place the miracle in its exact category; they believed on Jesus, and their lives were changed by the companion miracle of Jesus leaving His tomb."

The reason why I am going to try to define the area of operation of the gifts of power, is because truth is intended to be a gateway to experience, and a correct definition of the power gifts can help us to an experience of them, and there are some very important spiritual truths that we can learn from a correct definition of the gifts of power. Having considered many definitions of the areas of operation of the power gifts, the writer considers the following interpretation to be the most consistent and most Scriptural.

1) The gifts of power are the effects of the power of God operating in three different spheres of authority.

The three gifts of power all produce miracles, they are all acts of spiritual power, they are all the result of a faith strengthened by a special anointing of the Holy Spirit, they can all three be manifested on one occasion in one burst and display of God's power, however, Paul tells us that they can be looked upon as separate gifts operating in different spheres of authority.

The gifts of revelation give us the knowledge that we need to possess of the spiritual, intellectual, physical and material world; through them we can receive the knowledge of God's purposes and wisdom, the knowledge of people and things, and the knowledge of the activities of spirits. The gifts of power give us authority and power, as we need them, in these same spiritual, intellectual, physical and material areas. The gift of healing obviously only deals with the healing of the body and physical well-being, so the other two power gifts cover all the other needs for spiritual power that a Christian requires in the other areas of his life and ministry.

If we say that the workings of miracles produces miracles in the unseen spiritual world as well as the material world, we are left with no reason for a gift of faith its area of operation would be covered by the workings of miracles. The gift of faith is not saving faith, the fruit of faith, or the prayer of faith; it is a supernatural imparted faith and power for miracles. It is third in the list in 1Cor 12v8-10 and is undoubtedly of greater importance than the other power gifts. I suggest that Paul calls this gift the gift of faith: A. because it deals with the spiritual realm and spiritual things, where only faith can see and minister: B. because it describes the nature of the gift, it trusts God to manifest His power in us, for us, and on our behalf, rather than through us in miracles visible all to see, as in the workings of miracles. I also suggest that man being a creature with a spirit and capable of communing with God, is in a different category and sphere of authority than animals, vegetables, or mineral substances. The gift of faith obviously covers the spiritual realm and beings capable of having faith and spiritual experience and capable of communing with God. The gift of faith gives the power to bind heaven and earth, a power only given to apostles,

whereas the ministry of workings of miracles being 4th in the list in 1Cor 12v28, carries with it no such authority and is a less powerful gift. Each gift has its own area of authority and will not minister in the area of another gift.

The gift of faith gives one authority in the spiritual realm, it gives authority over men and angels. The working of miracles gives authority and power over material things and nature apart from man, it affects man's environment. The gifts of healing give one authority and power in the physical realm over infirmity, disease and sickness. However, we need to remember that we cannot manifest these gifts at will we only have this power and authority when the Holy Spirit gives it to us.

2) The three gifts of power operate directly and exclusively upon their sphere of authority.

The gift of faith operates directly upon men and angels, except in physical healing, which is the sphere of gifts of healings. The workings of miracles operate directly upon man's environment, i.e. upon material things and nature apart from man. The gift of healings operates directly upon man for physical healing. So we can say

a. The gift of faith will protect a child of God by clothing them with supernatural power.

It imposes spiritual power, but does not change material things or alter natural law. The workings of miracles protects by altering material things and by influencing nature. e.g. The three Hebrew boys in the fiery furnace were protected by supernatural power; the heat of the fire was not changed. If the fire had been extinguished by supernatural power it would have been a working of miracles and a lesser miracle and sign.

b. The gift of faith provides for a child of God by dealing directly with men or angels to meet the need.

the working of miracles provides by directly affecting nature, either by creation, alteration, or direction of nature. e.g. The angel bringing food to Elijah was a gift of faith, the ravens bringing food was a working of miracles.

c. The gift of faith in the areas of protection and provision causes God's power to act directly on our behalf.

This is in contrast to a manifestation of power through us. e.g. Paul's deliverance from the storm was an operation of angelic protection, that was manifested by God on Paul's behalf, rather than a manifestation of power through Paul. It directly protected Paul and the others on board, but it did not stop the storm. If, like Christ, Paul had commanded the storm to be stilled it would have been a working of miracles. God did not give Paul the authority to stop the storm, He wanted Paul to evangelise Malta, so the gift of faith protected Paul and the working of miracles did not operate. God's wisdom directs the manifestation of the greater gifts not our desire.

d) The gift of faith and the working of miracles can both be the means of judgement.

The direct judgement on man by supernatural power, which results in sickness and death, is in the realm of the gift of faith. The indirect judgement of man through nature is in the realm of the working of miracles, it first affects nature and then man. This authority was only given to the greatest of the Old Testament prophets and New Testament prophets and apostles.

e) If there is a creative miracle of healing, it is still in the sphere of a gift of healing.

The destruction of germs, the removal of cancer, the recreating of organs removed by surgery or injury, and all other physical healings by divine power, are in the realm of the gifts of healings.

3) Christians will vary very considerably in the power and authority they manifest through the gifts of power.

Paul tells us in 1Cor 12v8-12, that in a gathering of a local church, all the power gifts can be operated by different members of the church acting together as a body. However, this does not mean that they will be operated with the same power or regularity as the higher ministries of the Church. Every Christian can expect God to manifest a power gift through them, if they are in need of it, and a Christian in the local church can minister a power gift to others, but it is quite another thing to have a regular ministry of power gifts entrusted to you by God.

Paul's list in 1Cor 12v28, shows us the order of spiritual authority in the Church of God, all the higher ministries in the New Testament, teachers, manifested spiritual gifts, indeed, the extent of their authority from God was shown by their manifestation of spiritual gifts. Christian authority, "exousia," in the New Testament is proved by spiritual power, "dunamis," and the miracles that spiritual power performs. We also see from 1Cor 12v28, and other Scriptures, that a person may have the authority from God to have a regular ministry of one gift, but no authority to manifest another gift as a regular ministry. The person, who has authority from God to have a ministry of gifts of healings, may not have the authority from God to manifest the more important and more powerful ministry of workings of miracles. Even those with the gift of workings of miracles as a ministry, will not be allowed by God to

manifest this gift on its highest level of power in the judgement of people or nations, this authority was only manifested by the greatest of Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles.

The authority given to the apostles to bind and loose in heaven and earth, was greater than the authority given to the 70 who had "power over all the power of the enemy." Matt 16v18,19, John 20v21-23, Luke 10v19. Both groups had authority over evil powers, but the apostles had the authority to raise the dead, which the 70 did not have. Matt 9v1,2, 10v1,7,8 with Luke 10v1,9,17. The apostles also had authority to bring judgement upon people who were committing grave sin, such as Ananias and Sapphira, Elymas, Hymenaeus and Alexander. Acts 5v1-11, 13v6-12, 1Tim 1v20. The authority that was given to apostles as individuals could only be manifested in the local church by all the Christians acting as a body. Matt 18v15-19 with 1Cor 5v1-7.

In 1Cor 12v28, Paul gives us the order of authority in Christ's Church; apostles first; prophets second; teachers third; workers of miracles fourth; those with gifts of healings fifth; helps sixth; governments seventh; diversities of tongues eighth. We particularly need to remember that New Testament teachers had spiritual gifts and ministries of spiritual gifts, their equipment was not mere intellectual gymnastics, they preached with the Holy Spirit and the gifts sent down from heaven. 1Peter 1v12. The higher ministries of the Church have the greater gifts operating through them at a greater level of power through one person, than the local Church will manifest them as a body. It is one thing to have a miraculous provision of ones needs by a catch of fish, or the multiplying of oil, it is quite another thing to raise the dead, or to judge a person or nation through God's power. We have to recognise that it is God and God alone that sets His ministries in the Church, much of the present failure in Christian work is due to the fact that men have assumed God's prerogative, and set their standards for the ministry instead of God's standards. Christ and His early Church had to fight the most dreadful battles with religious leaders, who had replaced God's word and authority with their traditions, and those today who have authority given to them by God will experience a similar kind of opposition from those who follow the traditions of men instead of the Word of God.

The manifestations of the Holy Spirit's gifts grow in power as we grow in grace, faith and maturity. Christian authority can only be kept by fervent prayer and abiding in Jesus, as the apostles found out to their shame. Luke 9v1, 2,40 with Mark 8v28,29. It takes real prayer and consecration to keep a God-given authority, as Christ said to His disciples, it is only as we have communion with Him, are obedient to Him, and have faith in His name, that we have His authority. John 15v7.

To summarise then, we can say: The gift of faith, believes, commands and directs in the unseen spiritual realm, and deals directly with men and angels. The workings of miracles, believes, commands and directs in the material realm, it deals directly with man's environment. The gifts of healings operate in the physical realm, and deal with disease, infirmity and sickness.

The Close Co-Ordination Of The Gifts Of Power In Some circumstances.

As we have seen, all the power gifts are the result of the same power of God operating in different spheres of authority, they are the varied manifestations of God's power in different areas of our experience. Just as we can have all three of the gifts of revelation operating in one manifestation of God's knowledge and wisdom, we can have the manifestation of all the power gifts in one burst and display of the power of God. In the Scriptures we see many cases of what we may define as two separate gifts of the Spirit being manifested in one burst and display of the power of God, we will now consider some of them.

1) The gift of faith and the workings of miracles often gave Israel protection and victory in war.

On many occasions the power of God protected the Israelites and at the same time gave them the power, or worked miracles to defeat their foes. The most notable example of this is probably Exodus 17v11-13, where we see that it is only the operation of the gifts of power through Moses that brought victory against the army of the Amalekites. Joshua conquered Jericho through the gifts of power. Joshua.6v20.. Samuel's power gifts were mightier than Saul's picked army. 1Sam 7v4-14, 13v1-23. God helped Jehoahaz out of pure compassion and not because he or Israel deserved it. 2Kings 13v1-6. Both Asa and Jehoshaphat were given marvellous victories by divine grace and power. 2Chron 14v9-13, 15v6, 17v3, 20v1-25. Time would fail us to tell of Abraham, Gideon, Samson, Jonathan, David, and many others, who defeated "invincible" foes through God's power. Gen 14v1-17, Judges 7v16-25, 15v7-20, 1Sam 14v1-14, 17v11-58.

2) The gift of faith and the workings of miracles have provided supernatural means of transport.

Elijah was well known for it. 1Kings 18v11,12, 2Kings 2v16-18. We also see that Ezekiel, Philip, and the whole apostolic band experienced this also. Ezek 3v12-15, 8v3, Acts 8v39,40, John 6v20,21, also Rev 12v14. The same burst of supernatural power transported both materials and men.

3) When ministering to the sick and needy, gifts of faith and gifts of healings can operate in one burst of God's power.

A good example of this is seen in Acts 19v11,12, where pieces of linen and clothing which Paul had handled were laid upon the sick and demon-possessed and they were made whole. Elisha's bones were so full of God's power that they raised the dead. 2Kings.13v20,21. A person who is both sick and demon-possessed, will need both a gift of faith and a gift of healing to meet their needs; this can be given in one burst of power from God that meets both needs. Luke 4v17-19.

4) In deliverance from danger or death.

The apostles and Peter were delivered from prison by angelic ministry that brought into operation both the gift of faith and the workings of miracles in one display of God's power. Acts 5v16-24, 12v1-17. It was prayer that brought the manifestation of this spiritual power and the deliverance of Peter, even if the faith of those praying was not to high.

5) In the resurrection of the dead.

The resurrection of the dead manifests at least two of the gifts of power, and possibly all three. The gift of faith returns the soul and spirit to the body, the workings of miracles and gifts of healings seem to be both involved in the recreation and healing of a composed body, so what we could define as three separate gifts are really one burst and display of God's power. In the New Testament only the apostles were given the authority to raise the dead. Matt 10v8.

This is one of the greatest signs that God can give to convince people of the truth. However, even this great sign will fail to win some people to God, for if people don't want to believe, nothing will make them believe, some people fight God to the bitter end. Luke 16v19-31, NB: v28-31, John 12v37-41, 15v22-25, Acts 7v51-60, Rev 19v19,20. At the second coming of Christ, Heaven and earth will shake with the glory, might and power of Christ's coming, and this glory will be seen by all; millions of saints will be raised from the dead in a moment of time, but in spite of all this, Antichrist and his armies turn to fight against the Lord. Our God is omnipotent, it is an easy thing for Him to raise the dead, and Christians should not think that this is incredible. Acts.26v8. However, in the New Testament, this kind of ministry was only given to those who had the greatest ministries, in the Scriptures only men with apostolic and prophetic ministries have raised the dead. 1Kings 17v17-24, 2Kings 4v32-37, Luke 7v11, Mark 5v22 with Luke 8v41, John 11v41,47, Matt 28v1-10 with Matt 27v51-53, Acts 9v36-42, 20v9-12, 14v19,20.

NB: Some have felt that prolonged provision of one's needs, as Elijah being fed by ravens, and the never-failing barrel of meal, are a combined manifestation of the gift of faith and the workings of miracles; however, I feel that these are probably manifestations of the workings of miracles. In cases like this we cannot be too dogmatic, as we have said before the important thing is to have possession of the gifts not just a correct definition of them. We shall not know all the facts about spiritual gifts while here on earth; we shall have to wait until we meet our Lord for the full and perfect explanation of their workings.

The Gift Of Faith.

This is third in the list in 1Cor 12v8-10, and it is the greatest of the power gifts. Faith is the only thing that is mentioned in both the list of the fruit of the Spirit and the list of the gifts of the Spirit. Abbot and Smith say in their lexicon that the Greek word "pistis" can mean:

1) In active sense, faith, belief, trust, confidence; in the New Testament always of religious faith in God or Christ or spiritual things: ---- 2. in passive sense, a. fidelity, faithfulness: --- b. objectively, plighted faith, a pledge of fidelity.

Christian faith is both passive and active, and surely Gal 5v22 is speaking of both passive and active faith; whereas the gift of faith is speaking only of a very special area of active faith. As there are several different kinds of faith that are mentioned in the Scriptures, we have to carefully define what the gift of faith does, and does not, consist of.

1) We must not confuse the gift of faith with the other kinds of faith mentioned in the Scriptures.

a) It is not the faith of an Heathen.

The Heathen have the faith to live a normal life, e.g. to sow seed, conduct business etc., and Paul in Rom 1v18-32 tells us that they all know that there is a God and a day of judgement, but this is not Christian faith. 2Thess 3v2.

b) It is not a demon's faith.

Evil spirits believe in God and His power, they cannot do otherwise, but they resist God's power, purposes and

ministries. As James tells us they believe and tremble, indeed, they believe what they often tell men about. James 2v19.

c) It is not saving faith.

Though this saving faith is the basis and foundation of all other kinds of Christian faith and character, as Peter tells us in 2Peter 1v5. (Mr. A. Linford says that the grammar of Eph 2v8 would direct us to think that it is the salvation that is a gift, not the faith. However, saving faith is the result of repentance and the new birth, at which God gives a person the ability to apprehend spiritual things and believe, by giving them a new spirit, so saving faith can be looked upon as a gift also.) Christ said that we should rejoice over our saving faith more than over miracle working faith; He gave the 70 "power over all the power of the enemy" and they rejoiced over the miracles that were performed in Christ's name, Christ told them that their greatest reason for rejoicing was because their names were written in Heaven. Luke 10v17-20. Saving faith is the most important kind of faith because it brings us into a right relationship with God and gives us eternal life. All the other gifts and blessings that come to us as Christians, are the result of this primary gift of salvation in Christ. 2Cor 8v9, 9v15. In Hebrews 11 we have a catalogue of the three kinds of godly faith, saving faith, the fruit of faith, and the gift of faith, it is faith in general, and shows us the three kinds of faith that please God. Heb 11v6. As saving faith is the basis of all the other kinds of godly faith; no one can please God unless they have this saving faith.

Though saving faith is a divine benefaction and is miraculous in its effects upon the human personality, it is not within the sphere of the gift of faith; saving faith is limited to the sphere of salvation and forgiveness, i.e. to redemption through faith in Christ's death upon the cross. The spiritual gift of faith is limited to the area of supernatural miraculous power, and it is a temporary faith given to produce a specific miracle. Saving faith is a continuous thing, which starts when a person comes to Christ, and accepts Him as their saviour.

d) The gift of faith is not the fruit of faith.

The seed of faith is sown in our hearts by God's word and the new birth, can and does grow; the fruit of faith is the growth of the seed of saving faith. 1Peter 1v23, Rom 1v17, "from faith to faith." The fruit of faith is the natural growth of the seed of saving faith; it is the extension of one's faith in Christ's death, to faith in God in all other areas in our life. The fruit of faith is the foundation upon which the gift of faith operates. Indeed, the full manifestation of the glorious fruits of the Spirit spoken of in Gal 5v22,23., will bring a glorious manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit. This is what Paul is saying in 1Cor 11, he says love is the foundation for the correct manifestation of spiritual gifts. Paul brings all the fruits of the Spirit under love, for the fruit of love, really contain all the other fruits. In the Scriptures we can see that God has taken great pains to prepare the characters of His great servants, before He gave them great spiritual power. Great spiritual power inevitably brings great stresses into a person's life and demand some measure of spiritual maturity. The supernatural gift of faith needs the fruits of faith to sustain it, and it needs Christian Character to make its manifestations profitable to us as 1Cor 13v2 makes it quite clear.

The more of the fruit of faith you have, the easier it is to manifest the gift of faith and the other gifts. All the gifts operate more easily and more powerfully when they are manifested through a faith that is nourished by prayer, Bible study and consecration, as the Lord Jesus said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." John 15v7, 14v12-14. A living fellowship with Christ our Lord, and obedience to His words will nourish faith and character, and provide a safe spiritual foundation, and this applies to the mightiest apostle as well as the babe in Christ. The fruit of faith, which is a quality of character, triggers off the gift of faith, which is an act of power, it is a divinely supercharged fruit of faith. The gift of faith is the temporary miraculous manifestation and extension of the fruit of faith in relation to a specific purpose of God, by the power and faith of the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is pure mustard seed faith impregnated with divine miracle faith. It is God's faith poured into the soul of a Christian.

A Christian can, and should, manifest the fruit of faith all the time by being obedient to the Holy Spirit, whereas, the gift of faith is an occasional and temporary impartation of the Holy Spirit's faith and power to us, to fulfil a specific purpose of God. He manifests through us His miracle working faith and power; it is to enable the Holy Spirit to do what He desires. The gift of faith, like all the other gifts, is to fulfil the plans and purposes of God. To manifest the gifts like Christ and the early Church demands the same God-directed life that they had, apostolic power and immaturity do not accompany one another, and rebellion and disobedience are in God's eyes as bad as idolatry, iniquity and witchcraft. 1Sam 15v22,23. The fruit of faith is an attitude of mind that trusts God daily in every area of life, and this spiritual frame of mind is essential for a powerful exercise of the gift of faith. To operate the gifts at full power needs real spiritual preparation and a development of the fruit of faith, Christ said the demons in the lunatic boy of Mark 9v20-20, could only be cast out by a prayerful person at the peak of spiritual power. Paul tells us in 1Cor 13, that we cannot divorce character from spiritual power and get away with it; those who try to end up with a shallow ministry of the gifts like the Corinthians, or even in complete spiritual shipwreck like Balaam, Judas, and Demas. 2Tim 4v10. Even the gift of faith does not profit us if we lack faithfulness and love. We see from Samson, that a person can exercise the power gifts for a while, even after grave sin, but Samson continued to play the fool

and did not repent, God divested him of His spiritual power, let us "follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts" and we shall be spiritually safe.

e) The gift of faith is not the prayer of faith.

The prayer of faith is a manifestation of the fruit of faith; and the prayer of faith often precedes, or even normally precedes, the operation of the gifts of power. There is a very close link between the fruit of faith, the prayer of faith, and the gifts of power; they are all vital partners in Christian experience. We read in James 5v14-18, that it was Elijah's earnest prayers of faith that brought into operation the gifts of power. In Kings 18v41-45, we see that Elijah prayed earnestly seven times before the answer came. It is interesting to note that James exhorts elders in Christian churches to pray through like Elijah for the sick, this kind of persistent prayer, is sometimes necessary for those who are seriously ill, and it is the responsibility of the elders of the churches to pray through for those who are seriously ill.

f) The difference between personal faith and a faith to minister to others.

We can ask ourselves what was the "great faith" of the Centurion and the little Syrophenician woman of Matt 8v10 and Matt 15v28. It could not have been a natural faith, for natural faith, and the natural man cannot perceive the things of God. 1Co r2v14. Christ was the object of their faith, they both called Jesus, "Lord," they both believed that Christ's authority was of God, they both had a great personal faith in Christ, and a saving faith without any doubt. Matt 8v10-12, Matt 15v21-28. Both the Centurion and the Syrophenician woman were driven by the very best of motives to come to Christ, They had a deep concern for one they loved, a desperation of faith because of love, they both had a great faith, but they were not able to meet the need of their loved one, it took Christ's faith and the gifts of the Spirit that were manifested through Him to meet their need. It seems a person can have great faith that God will meet their need, or a loved one's need, but it is another matter to believe that God will meet other peoples needs through them, in other words to have a ministry to others, Peter did what the Centurion and the Syrophenician could not do, he believed God for miracles through his ministry, he even walked on water, but Christ said his fruit of faith was still small compared with what it could be. Matt 14v31.

The traditions of men can greatly dull a person's faith. It is a striking thing that Zachariah, who God said had a blameless life, was judged by the angel for his lack of faith, whereas, young Mary pleased God by believing for a far greater miracle and pleased God by her faith. It seems that continual contact with the tradition-bound religious leaders of his day, had dulled the faith of Zachariah. Our faith shows our capacity for God, and every kind of Christian faith thrives on a genuine repentance, real seeking of God, humility, simplicity, and sincerity, and above all a genuine love for others. However, it is one thing to have a great personal faith for God to meet our own needs, and quite another to have faith to minister to other people's needs by virtue of a ministry which has been given by God.

2) The gift of faith is not to be confused with the gift of workings of miracles.

As we have considered the area of operation of the power gifts in our introduction to the power gifts we will only briefly consider this now. The gift of faith acts in a wider sphere of action than the gift of workings of miracles, and exercises a higher degree of spiritual power, for the gift of faith deals with spiritual laws, and the workings of miracles with natural laws The gift of faith is the most important of the power gifts, for it deals with unseen spiritual forces and men, whereas the workings of miracles deals only with material things. The gift of faith gives one an authority and power in the spiritual realm, in areas where faith is necessary to see, whereas, the working of miracles gives one authority and power in the material realm where all can see. The workings of miracles usually results in an immediate miracle, whereas, the gift of faith often operates over a prolonged period, e.g. Jacob blessing his grandchildren. Gen 27v27, Heb 11v20.

3) The gift of faith does not remove a person from spiritual conflict.

While the gift of faith is given a person is full of God's faith through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, but once this anointing has gone a person can have great spiritual conflict. The supernatural extension of faith that comes with all the power gifts, does not make it impossible for a person ever to fear, fail or doubt God again, as the story of Elijah demonstrates. 1Kings 18v37-39,41-46, 19v1-18. God will never let us be independent of other Christians; even Paul had to have the fellowship of other Christians to lift his spirits. Acts 28v14,15, 1Cor 12v12-25.

4) The gift of faith often works in co-ordination with the gifts of revelation.

The gift of faith is often preceded or accompanied by a discerning of spirits, for both deal with the spirit world. The gift of faith is also often needed to bring to pass the purposes of God revealed by the word of wisdom, or to deal with the circumstances that have been revealed by a word of knowledge. The gift of faith depends on the gifts of revelation for information and instruction, and they depend on it, and the other gifts of power for the fulfilment of God's purposes.

5) The gift of faith is certainly not a ceremony, ritual, or mere pretension.

You can be a Papal or Pentecostal pretender and impart nothing to people, even though you go through all the motions and say all the right words or prayers when asking God's blessing upon a person. In the same way a person can be excommunicated by a church, denomination or fellowship, in the name of God, when God has had nothing to do with it and in fact has considered the excommunication a sin. Christ said the religious leaders who excommunicated the blind men who Christ had healed, were sinful and blind and said that judgement awaited them. John 9v32-41. Many of God's great men of church history had the same experience. John 16v1-4. How much wickedness has been done in the name of God, but those who curse those who God has blessed will find God's curse coming upon them. Gen 12v3, Matt 5v44, Rom 12v14, 1Cor 4v12, 14v16. There is a genuine Christian excommunication as Paul states in 1Cor 5v1-7, but the followers of Christ long to restore and bless, not to judge. 2Cor 2v1-8, Luke 23v34.

Definition.

The gift of faith is not natural faith, saving faith, or the fruit of faith. It is a supernatural confidence and power imparted by the Holy Spirit, which enables a child of God to be protected in danger, or to be provided for when in need. It can be the means of bestowing blessing upon the children of God, or the means of judgement upon the enemies of God. It gives one the power to cast out, restrain and constrain evil spirits. It can defend us from evil angelic powers, and direct good angelic powers to our aid to meet our needs. This gift can enable us to overcome all natural and evil powers that come against us, we can either experience deliverance out of, or from trial, or experience a supernaturally sustained faith that can overcome a; trial, persecution and physical pain.

The gift of faith is an intermittent spiritual gift, that is imparted to us at the will of the Holy Spirit; and it is the Holy Spirit's faith and power imparted to us to meet a specific need. The gift of faith relies entirely on God's power and not upon human effort. It is not my faith struggling, it is God's faith working through me, it is the out-shining of the indwelling Holy Spirit's faith and power. It is a special faith for a specific task, and it mainly operates in the sphere of danger and great need, and in the path of Christian service.

Some Examples and Uses of the Gift of Faith.

1) The gift of faith can give divine protection in danger.

- a) It protected Moses from Pharaoh's wrath. Exodus 3v10 7v10, 14v19.20.
- b) It protected Jonah in the whale's stomach. Jonah 3v4,9. Jonah knew that God would deliver him and bring him into His Temple. A word of knowledge plus a gift of faith.
- c) Samson was protected from the swords and spears of thousands of Philistines, but it could not protect him from his own sin. Judges 15v9-20, 16v1v21, NB: v20.
- d) It protected Daniel from the lions; angelic power protected Daniel from the lions it did not change the lions, which ate up Daniel's enemies. Dan 6v16-23, NB: v22.
- e) A gift of faith protected Daniel's three friends in the fiery furnace. Divine power preserved them from a heat that would have melted gold. Dan 3v17,18,25. We see in Dan 3v17,18, the fruit of faith which triggered off the gift of faith.
- f) Christ was protected by this gift on several occasions. From His towns-people who just about to throw Him over a precipice. Luke 4v29,30. From attempts to stone Him and arrest Him. John 7v44-46, 8v59, 10v39. Christ was hidden from their site by supernatural power in John 8v59. Christ said in John 11v8-10 that God's protecting power goes with those who walk in the light.
- g) In the book of Acts we see angels delivering the apostles and others from great danger. Acts 5v17-26, NB: v19, 12v1-11, Acts 27v22-25, Heb 1v14. In the setting free of the apostles from prison, what we would call two gifts of the spirit, the gift of faith and the workings of miracles were operated through the ministry of the angel.

2) The gift of faith can give divine comfort and peace in devilish persecution.

We read in the Scripture of those who have been upheld in murderous persecution and devilish torture, they were tortured, not accepting the deliverance offered them if they would but deny their faith, they stood true in "the test of public mockery jeers and flogging," and "shackles and imprisonment." Some "were stoned to death," others were "cut in pieces with knives or swords." Others were so impoverished that they had only sheepskins and goatskins to clothe them, and suffered want, oppression and cruelty from a wicked world. Heb 11v35-39. Without doubt all these dear children of God experienced divine strength, peace and comfort, such as Stephen received when he died for his faith. Stephen had a special filling of the Holy Spirit, as well as wonderful visions of Heaven. Acts 7v54-60, 6v15. The Lord Jesus was strengthened at the transfiguration and in Gethsemane by God's power and angelic ministry. Luke 9v27-36, 22v42-44. We are certainly not on our own in persecution, God is with us.

3) The gift of faith can meet our material needs.

Some think that Elijah being fed by the ravens was a gift of faith. I feel that as God's power operated upon the ravens and led them to Elijah, it was a working of miracles. I feel that the feeding of Israel by the quails, and the coin in the mouth of the fish seem to be a working of miracles too. 1Kings 17v1-16, Exodus 16v13, Num 11v31, Matt 17v24-27. However, we should not be too dogmatic about this, the gifts do fringe upon one another in certain areas, and make definition difficult.

I feel that miracles of provision met by divine power through human and angelic channels come within the scope of the gift of faith. We think of Christ's miracle of provision through the ladies spoken of in Luke 8v1-3; the manna, which the Scripture tells us was the food of angels. Psalm 78v24,25; and Elijah being fed by an angel when he was completely exhausted. 1Kings 19v4-8. The greatest of modern day miracles performed by the gift of faith is probably of George Muller's needs for his orphanages; and one hears of many more miracles of provision done by our great and wonderful heavenly Father in our own time besides this. Hallelujah.

4) The gift of faith can bestow spiritual blessing.

Here we need to remember that a person's faith and character very often decides what a person receives from God; and we need to remember that we cannot impart a blessing if we do not have an anointing and authority from God; this is a very demanding ministry. This gift is very often manifested in the ministry of the laying on of hands, and in the ministry of the prayer warrior.

- a) Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. Gen 27v27-41, Heb 11v20. Jacob blessed his sons and Joseph's children. Gen 47v31, 48v8-28, Heb 11v21.
- b) Christ blessed the children, and something was imparted to them. Mark 10v13-16.
- c) Moses blessed Joshua and the 70 elders when they were ordained to their respective ministries, the result was a real spiritual experience of the greatest worth. Num 27v18-23 with Deut 34v9, Exodus 18v25, Num 11v24-29, 1Sam 10v1-13, 16v12,13.
- d) Christ ordained His apostles and the 70, and gave them power to accomplish God's purposes, and the New Testament Church followed His example, this was certainly no ceremony or mere formality, spiritual power and authority were imparted. Matt 10v1-8, Luke 10v1-24, Acts 6v1-7, 13v1-4. The Samaritans, Paul and the Ephesians received the baptism in the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. Acts 8v14-19, 9v17, 19v1-6.

This gift can bring real victory to prayer warriors, for it can bring revival blessing to a church, an outpouring of the Spirit in answer to a prayer of faith, as we often see in the early Church. Acts 4v23-31, 10v44-48.

5) The gift of faith can be used to curse and bring judgement.

- a) The death of all of Egypt's firstborn, and the boils upon the Egyptians were both caused by the gift of faith. Exodus 9v8-12, 11 (all), 12v1-36.
- b) Elisha's judgement on Gehazi. 2Kings 5v25-27.
- c) Elijah bringing fire from heaven upon men, was the direct operation of spiritual power to judge men, so this was a gift of faith, whereas, the fire on the altar was a working of miracles, because it affected nature and was in a different sphere of authority. Likewise the cursing of the rebellious young men of 2Kings 2v23,24., the Hebrew word for "children" in A.V. is used of people up to the age of 40, is a working of miracles because it effected nature, then, men.
- d) There were several people who were judged through this gift in the New Testament, Acts 5v5,9-11, 1Tim 1v20, 1Cor 5v1-5. However, we have to remember that Christ came not to judge or condemn, but to save and bless, and the manifestation of this gift in judgement will be very rare. God loves to bless and save, judgement is His "strange act." Isaiah 28v21.

6) The gift of faith is the means of casting out, rebuking and restraining evil spirits.

Does the casting out of demons come within the scope of the workings of miracles or the gift of faith? We read in Mark 9v38,39, that the casting out of a demon is an act of "dunamis." However, "dunamis," i.e. "power," operates in all the gifts of power, it is the sphere of operation that decides which gift they are, and I feel that the gift of faith speaks best of spiritual power operating in the unseen spiritual realm. I would like all readers to think upon this, but I think that you can't put casting out of demons under any other gift other than the gift of faith. We can most certainly say that you have to live close to God to deal with evil spirits, as even the apostles found out. Luke 9v1,2, 37v42 with Mark 9v14-29, NB: v28,29. Like the sons of Sceva found out, you can be in real trouble if you treat demons lightly. Acts 19v11-17. Christians are defended by God from attacks of evil, but it is quite another thing to attack evil powers, particularly if you are not prayed up; and every Christian has not got authority over "all the power of the enemy" as the 12 and 70 had. A Christian may have a discerning of spirits, but not the gift of faith to expel the demon. You can only deliver people from demons if they desire it, the Scribes and Pharisees did not want to be delivered from the evil spirits that inspired them, and so Christ could not help them. John 8v32-44. Demons that are cast out of people will return if the person still desires to live in sin and does not accept Christ as their Saviour. In the same way you can only bring deliverance to those who believe false demon-inspired doctrine, if they

desire it.

a) Unclean demons that take over a person's body can be cast out by the gift of faith.

These demons control a person's mind and body to perform their evil desires. Luke 4v31-37, 8v26-39. Sometimes Jesus forced demons to give details about themselves, Lk.8v30., on another occasion He asked the details from the relative. Mark 9v20-22. These unclean demons can also cause sickness, for whatever they touch, they defile and damage, and love to destroy. As we have seen under the discerning of spirits, evil spirits can be the cause of some sickness, deafness, blindness, dumbness madness, and epilepsy. Matt 4v23,24, 8v28-34, 12v22-24, 15v21-28, 17v14-21 with Mark 9v23. However, demons are not the sole cause of sickness and we must take great care not to become fanatical and foolish about this, and go around casting demons out of every sick person. Satan caused Job to be sick without possessing him, but he had to get the permission from God to do it. God protects His children from the powers of darkness; He puts a hedge about us. Job 1v9,10.

b) Unclean spirits that attack the mind can be dealt with by the gift of faith.

Evil spirits attack the mind, and take real pleasure in causing people anguish of mind by their continual nagging; a Christian by the gift of faith can bind demons, who are doing this, or consign them to the pit. A Christian who has the gift of faith can help people who are too weak to fight for themselves against the lies, naggings, and seductions of evil forces.

We can see from the above uses of the gift of faith, that it is a very precious gift from God, let us all earnestly desire this greatest gift of power, for without it the Church of Christ cannot fulfil its New Testament commission as Christ intended.

The Workings Of Miracles.

The workings of miracles comes after the gifts of healings in the list in 1Cor 12v8-12, but before the gifts of healings in 1Cor 12v28. It is fifth in the list in 1Cor 12v8-19. The words "workings of miracles," are a translation of the Greek words "energemata dunameon," both words being in the plural. The word "energemata" is the plural of "energema," of which Robinson says; "energema, 'what is wrought,' i.e. 'effect produced,' 'operation'; 1Cor.12v6. v10 'energemata dunameon,' 'operations of miracles,' put for miraculous effects, the gift of working of miracles." Arndt and Gingrich say "energemata dunameon," means 'activities that call forth miracles.'"

The Greek word "dunameon" is the plural of "dunamis," which in the A.V. is usually translated as "power," as in Acts 1v8. However, the Holy Spirit's power is manifested in all the gifts of power, they are all acts of "dunamis," it is the sphere of the operation of that power that decides what we call each gift of power.

1) The gift of workings of miracles should not be confused with the other power gifts.

a) A gift of healing is a miracle of healing; an act of dunamis, but it is not a gift of workings of miracles. All physical healing comes within the scope of gifts of healings, which is wholly concerned with miracles in relation to physical well-being and health, and even creative miracles of healing are within the sphere of the gifts of healings.

b) The gift of faith deals with the unseen spiritual world where faith is necessary to see, the workings of miracles deals with miracles seen in the material world. "Workings of powers" could obviously refer to the operation of all the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit, but Paul tells us that this gift works in a specialised area. It is not in the realm of knowledge, edifying gifts, physical healing, or the gift of faith. The gift of faith is placed before the workings of miracles in importance, because miracles with material things are less important than spiritual blessings given by a gift of faith. The gift of faith operates in the unseen spiritual realm on spiritual forces and men's spiritual state, whereas, the workings of miracles is an operation of spiritual power that changes natural law and material things and produces seen miraculous effects.

2) The workings of miracles is the least common of the gifts of power.

This is because one does not have to deal with material things, or material needs, as often as seen with people's spiritual and physical needs. Indeed, most of people's material needs can be met by human resources, it is usually only in severe emergency that miracles of provision become necessary.

There have also been times when great signs and wonders have been performed through the gift of workings of miracles, and the other power gifts. These great manifestations of divine power have taken place at the start of the covenants of Law and Grace, and at other times when Satan's power has been manifested in an alarming way. However, these manifestations of divine power should have continued, but human sin and failure has hindered God's plans and desires. Whenever God's people have returned to Scriptural simplicity God has restored all the power gifts, including the workings of miracles to His people. The pattern for this Church age is not the many

centuries of the Old Testament when no miracles were performed by God because of human failure and sin; our pattern is the ministry of Christ and His early Church.

In the Old Testament the gift of workings of miracles was very often used in bringing judgement upon people through nature, however, this gift is almost totally used as a blessing in this present age of grace and mercy. In this Church age, the emphasis is upon forgiveness of sin and healing of the body, and so in the New Testament we see that workings of miracles that bring blessing are outnumbered by gifts of healings, by at least a thousand to one. However, the workings of miracles comes before the gifts of healings as a work of greater spiritual power and authority, as Paul states in 1Cor 12v28, for it has a tremendous effect in influencing people to righteousness by revealing God's power and glory. God, in His compassion, has put physical healing to the forefront of the New Testament commission, and so the workings of miracles is much less common than the gifts of healings. Matt 10v8, Luke 9v1,2, 10v1,9,17, Mark 16v17-20.

The workings of miracles are manifested at God's desire and will, not at the desire of the human will, the Holy Spirit gives "severally as He will." God is very gracious and may allow Peter to walk on the water to show the possibilities of his faith, or deliver Samson from Gaza just because He is merciful, however, like Christ, we should normally expect these gifts to be manifested under the guidance of words of wisdom, so we walk in the way and wisdom of God. Matt 14v22-33, Judges 16v1-3, John 2v4, 5v19,20 with 6v1-21, 7v7, 4v1-4,34. etc. It is sovereign grace and wisdom that decides the manifestation of this gift, we cannot always expect God to manifest this gift even if we are in great need, e.g. James was killed, but Peter was delivered by a workings of miracles through angelic ministry. Acts 12v2,11.

3) The workings of miracles should not be spiritualised away.

Some of the miracles in the Bible are interpreted in a purely spiritual sense to illustrate a spiritual truth, by some preachers; this is quite all right, as long as we recognise the challenge of the miracles of the Bible and pray to God for the same gift to be manifested in the Church today. Others have tried to say, without any Scriptural warrant, that the miracles performed by the power gifts, have been replaced by miracles of salvation. Miracles of salvation and grace are truly the most wonderful of God's miracles, and all of those who are saved rejoice in the grace that has saved us; but God is not limited to these miracles of salvation and regeneration, He has saved people in every age, nor has He replaced the workings of miracles by the miracle of salvation. God is still on the throne and works miracles of every kind.

Definition.

The gift of workings of miracles is a supernatural ability given by the Holy Spirit, to interrupt, suspend, or control the laws of nature. It is the operation of the power of God upon material things, for the purpose of being a sign, blessing, or judgement. It operates upon the elements, vegetation and the rest of the animal world apart from man.

Some Examples and Uses of the Workings of Miracles.

1) As a sign.

a) To cause people to see the might and majesty of God.

This is, of course, the primary reason for all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but it has a particular application to the gift of workings of miracles. This gift was particularly manifested with this purpose in mind delivering Israel from Egypt, even the spiritualist magicians of Egypt had to admit, "This is the finger of God." Exodus 6v6,7, 8v19, 9v16. God hardened the heart of Pharaoh by letting him off, and probably by allowing him to be deceived by a lying spirit as Ahab was in 2Chron 18v20-22, Rom 2v2-6 with Exodus 7v13,14,22, 8v15,19,32, 9v7,12,34,35, 10v1,20,27, 11v10, 14v8, 4v21, 7v3, 14v4,7. The miracles were also a sign to the surrounding nations. Exodus 15v11-16, Deut 4v34, 5v15 with Joshua 2v9-11, 5v1. Elijah brought fire from heaven through a gift of faith and brought Israel face to face with the majesty and might of God. 1Kings 18v36-39.

b) To conform the message of a prophet to a nation.

Many prophets did not work any miracles to confirm their messages; they confirmed their prophecies by words of wisdom and knowledge that came to pass. However, there are numerous cases of prophets confirming their message from God with miracles. The unknown prophet who prophesied against Jeroboam. 1Kings 13v1-10. Samuel's prophecy of thunder. 1Sam 12v16-25. Elijah and the fire from heaven. 1Kings 18v36-39. The many miracles and signs that were performed through Moses to the Egyptians and Israelites.

c) To confirm God's word and call to a person.

It is a striking thing that even the angels worked miracles as signs of the truth of their word. Gideon had an offering consumed by heavenly fire, the sign of the fleece, in order to build up his faith. How gracious God is. Judges 6v1-

23,36-40, Judges 7v9-14. Isaiah's word to Hezekiah was confirmed by a remarkable miracle. 2Kings 20v1-11. Aaron's rod budded to show he was God's choice. Exodus 7v10, Num 17v8. Elisha's authority was proved by a great miracle. 2Kings 2v13-15. The call of Peter, James, John and Andrew was confirmed by a miraculous catch of fish. Luke 5v1-11. If Christ and angels needed signs and wonders to convince people of the truth of their message, we certainly do. Luke 1v20-23,63,64, 2v1-12,34, Heb 2v3,4.

d) To establish faith and confirm the preaching of the Gospel.

When Christ turned the water into wine it greatly helped to establish their faith in Christ. John 2v1-11,23. The feeding of the 5,000 convinced many of the truth of Christ's words, but also failed with many others who did not want spiritual things. John 6v1-14,26,27, also the feeding of the 4,000. Mt.15v32-39. When Christ and Peter walked on the water the aim was to establish faith. Matt 14v22-36. We see that both Christ and the apostle Paul looked upon miracles as signs that helped people to believe, and this is why the Church needs them. John 5v19,20,36,44, 14v9-12.

2) To provide for those who are in need.

We read of many cases of miraculous provision in the Scriptures. Water out of solid rock at Rephidim. Exod.17v1-7. Manna for Israel in the wilderness wanderings, Exodus 16v15-35, and quails. Exodus 16v13, Num 11v31. In 1Kings 17v1-16, we see Elijah provided for by God. We also see the miracles of provision through Elisha's ministry; water and land healed, 2Kings 2v19-22; the widows oil multiplied, 2Kings 4v1-7; the poisoned food healed, 2Kings 4v38-41; the loaves multiplied, 2Kings 4v42-44; the lost axe recovered, 2Kings 6v1-7. Elisha was saved a long walk and great inconvenience by a remarkable miracle. 2Kings 2v13-15. We have already seen our Lord's great miracles of provision when He fed the multitudes and provided miraculous catches of fish. Mark 6v32-44,48, 8v1-9, Luke 5v1-11, John 21v3-11. The coin in the mouth of the fish is also a wonderful miracle. Matt 17v24-27.

3) To deliver from danger.

God took the wheels off the chariots of Pharaoh and opened the red sea. Exodus 14v16,21, 15v23-25. Samson killed a lion and carried off the gates of Gaza. Judges 14v5,6, 16v1-3. David killed Goliath by working of miracles. 1Sam 17v37,45-50. The Lord Jesus twice stilled the storms that threatened the disciple's safety. Luke 8v22-25, Matt 14v24,30-33, 6v18-21. God sent an earthquake to set Paul and Silas free and covert the jailer. Acts 16v25-34. God delivers Paul from the poisonous snake. Acts 28v1-6 with Mark 16v18.

4) To bring judgement.

One cannot help but think of the judgements and plagues of Egypt. Aaron's rod swallows up the magician's rods. Exodus 7v10-13. The river, etc., to blood. Exodus 7v14-25. The frogs upon Egypt. Exodus 8v1-15. The dust became lice. Exod 8v16-19. Here the magicians confess that this is the finger of God. Swarms of flies. Exodus 8v20-32. The cattle die through disease. Exodus 9v1-7. (The next plague I have called a gift of faith because it directly affects man, some might disagree with this. The boil upon the Egyptians Exod 9v8-12). The great hail and fire upon men and cattle, which kills many of both. Exodus 9v13-35. (This could be a gift of faith plus working of miracles, I leave the reader to judge for themselves.) The locusts. Exodus 10v1-20. Thick black darkness for three days, made it impossible to see. Exodus 10v21-29. (The death of the firstborn through angelic judgement, I have called a gift of faith, some may disagree, I leave the reader to decide for themselves. Exodus 11 and 12v1-36.

The ground opened up and swallowed up the sons of Korah. Num 16v19-35. God stopped the sun setting for Joshua to make sure of judgement upon the Amorites. Joshua 10v6-14. Elijah brought a famine upon the land to judge them for their sin. 1Kings 17v1, 18v1,42-46 and James 5v14-20. (Some think that this is a gift of faith.) Christ caused a tree to wither away because of its empty profession, and to give an illustration of faith's power. Mark 11v12-14,20-24.

As we have said before, the emphasis during this age of grace is upon God's love and mercy through the gifts of healings, and not upon judgement. However, at the end of this age when sin and Satanic power become more prevalent, the Church will again receive power to judge their foes under certain circumstances. The two witnesses of Rev 11v1-8. have power given to them to bring suffering and death upon their evil foes. This kind of power will be absolutely essential to deal with the wickedness in the world due to Antichrist and his followers. The workings of miracles through nature have a powerful effect upon people's consciences, the direct judgement of God through angels, or the power of God, is also very awe-inspiring. Both the gift of faith and the workings of miracles can have a very powerful effect when used in judgement. In the near future the Church will need these precious gifts of the Holy Spirit, very much. Beloved, let us earnestly desire the Holy Spirit's lovely gifts.

The Gifts Of Healings.

This is fourth in the list in 1Cor 12v8-10, it is in the plural, "gifts of healings," in the original Scriptures. It is in the

plural because one person can be the channel of many gifts of healings, some have seen hundreds and even thousands healed in one Christian gathering, through one person's ministry. We should remember that:

1) Gifts of healings should not be confused with medical care.

Christians should be the last to disparage the work of doctors and nurses who are dedicated to the relief of suffering, there is a definite place for natural healing, and God Himself gave the Israelites sound medical law. The world's wisest man said that medicine could do as much good as a happy disposition. Prov 17v22, Ezek 47v12, Rev 22v2. However, gifts of healings are quite separate from the good and best that medical care can accomplish, they are supernatural healings from God.

2) Gifts of healings from God must not be confused with Spiritualism or Christian Science.

Neither of these are Christian, and indeed they attack the vital Christian doctrines, they are both Satanic in origin. See the note on discerning of Spirits. Those who go to Spiritualists for healing are in the gravest danger.

3) The gifts of healings are the most common of the gifts of power.

The command to heal the sick is one of the primary commands of Christ, it is strongly emphasised in the command to evangelise. It is a striking thing that God used workingmen to perform mighty healings, and this caused many of the powerless professional religious leaders of Christ's day to turn green with envy and bitterness, because it exposed their failure and spiritual defeat. It is the most common because divine love desires to meet the needs of suffering humanity, and this is probably why gifts of healings are placed before workings of miracles in 1Cor 12v8-10, even though Paul tells us in 1Cor 12v28, that workings of miracles come before gifts of healings in Spiritual power and importance. People certainly matter to God. There is no judgement in healing, it is a manifestation of divine love, and this is why gifts of healings occur more commonly in the New Testament than in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, the age of grace and mercy, we see God performing His desires for grace and mercy.

4) The gifts of healings must not be confused with the other gifts of power.

All miracles of healing come within the scope of gifts of healing, whether they are simple healing or mighty miracles of creation of new organs. Gifts of healings only deal with man's physical condition, though of course, any healing has a profound spiritual effect on a person. The casting out of demons comes within the scope of the gift of faith, not within the scope of gifts of healings.

5) The gifts of healings cannot cause a person to heal everybody who is sick.

It is certainly true that the floodtide of our Lord's and the early Church's ministry, everybody that was prayed for was healed, and Mt.8v16-18. tells us that this is the extent of God's promise. However, Christ only healed one out of a multitude at the pool of Bethesda, this makes it quite clear that all did not come to Christ for healing, and that Christ could not heal all at will. See John 5v1-14. A measure of faith and repentance preceded the healings that Christ performed. Matt 8v13, 9v22,29, 15v28, Mark 5v36, Acts 6v5, Heb 11v5,6. The faith of friends or relatives can also be the means of bringing healing to a needy loved one. Mark 2v5, 9v22-24,28,29.

Sometimes people under the discipline of God like Gehazi come into meetings for prayer and expect to be healed; we need to remember that God can make sick as well as heal. 1Cor 111v29-32, 2Kings 5v20-27, Deut 32v39. Serious sin definitely hinders healing as does spiritual sloth and unbelief. Heb.6v12. 11v6. An unforgiving hard-hearted attitude can stop Christians from receiving healing or blessing from God. Matt 18v35, Mark 11v25,26. There is divine sickness as well as divine healing, and the purpose of this discipline is reformation of character. Psalm 73 (all), Psalm 119v67,71-75, 1Cor 11v28-32. However, if we repent of our sins we can be healed of our sicknesses, for it is certainly not the will of God, for a Christian to be continually sick or afflicted, our heavenly Father wants to give us "good gifts" and to bless us. James 5v15,16, Luke 11v11-13.

You cannot press a gift of healing upon a person who does not want to receive one, the people who Christ prayed for were people who believed in His ministry, and came to Him for healing. Faith is needed not only in the person who is the channel of the gift of healing, but also the person who is receiving the gift of healing, unless of course they are mentally sick, or demon-possessed. Matt 8v5-13, Mark 3v10, 5v29-34, 6v1-6 with Matt 13v58.

6) Gifts of healings do not enable us to avoid the consequences of intemperate living.

Some people ask God for healing, when what they should really do is change their manner of life. Many people make themselves ill by over-stressing their body with overwork, lack of rest and sleep, and by foolish diet. We need to remember that the Bible states that we have to take care of our bodies or reap the consequences. Phil 2v25-30, Psalm 127v2, 107v17-21. In Psalm 103v3,5 we read that God expects us to eat good food to renew our health, as well as look to God for healing. The Law gave very good practical advice on sensible living, and we need to take very careful heed to it. There is so much sickness that we can avoid by temperate living, and so much ill health that

could be changed to good health by temperate living. Finney said that one of the things that could bring a revival to a halt was the intemperate living of Christians; he said that Christians could have breakdowns in their health through placing too great a strain on their bodies. However, sometimes even under these circumstances, God can be very gracious and heal us; but let us use wisdom, for it is not glorifying to God for the world to see Christians ill through foolish intemperate living. Psalm 107v1-43, Phil 2v25-30, 1Cor 6v20, Eph 5v29.

7) Sickness is primarily due to the loss of the tree of life through Adam's sin.

Sickness is not God's intended lot for humanity; God's perfect will is perfect health. Gen 2v9, 3v22-24, Ezek 47v6-12, Rev 22v2,14,15. However, though we are at present cut off from receiving perpetual and perfect health from the tree of life, we can receive divine healing direct from our heavenly Father; and so even under the old covenant there were some very definite promises of divine healing. Exodus 15v26, Psalm 105v37, Psalm 103v1-5,8,13-18, Num 21v5-9, 2Kings 5v8-17, 20v4-11. The Old Testament prophets were told that one of the outstanding activities of the promised Messiah was going to be His ministry of healing, Isaiah 53v4 with Matt 8v16,17, Isaiah 35v5,6, and His manifestation of spiritual power. Isaiah 61v1,2 with Luke 4v40,41, Deut 18v15-19, Psalm 45v6,7 with Heb 1v8,9. When the Lord Jesus started His ministry, He showed that it was the will and desire of God to meet the needs of the sick and oppressed, by spending a large part of His time ministering to those who were ill or oppressed of the Devil, and He gave the same commission to His early Church. John 5v29,30, Acts 10v38, Luke 4v40,41, Matt 10v8, Mark 16v15-20. (The verses in Mark 16v9-20 are certainly part of Mark's Gospel. There are over 600 Greek manuscripts of the Gospels, and only two do not have these verses; the Vaticanus, which has a blank space left for these verses, and the Sinaiticus. These are the oldest Greek manuscripts, but there is strong evidence that these verses were in other older manuscripts, because about 100 Church Fathers who wrote before our oldest Greek manuscripts, have all said that these verses were written by Mark in his Gospel, and about 200 Church Fathers who lived between 300 to 600 A.D. confirm their testimony. The Syriac "Peshitto" version, 150 A.D., contain these verses, as do the Latin, Gothic, Egyptian, and Armenian versions. The Vatican manuscript has also, doubtless through age, got considerable other parts of Scripture missing, Gen 1 to 46, Psalm 105 to 137, Heb 9v14 to 13v25, all of 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon and Revelation. The overwhelming mass of evidence is in favour of these verses, those who make the loss of ancient documents the excuse for doing away with Christ's commission to His Church to heal the sick, have the most fragile reasons for doing so.)

Definition.

Gifts of healings are the supernatural workings of the Holy Spirit, that enable the sick to be healed of any disease or infirmity. It is not to be confused with healing through medicine, or any other natural means of healing, no matter how commendable or praiseworthy they may be. There are several ways in which a person can receive a gift of healing from the Lord to restore their health.

1) Through personal prayer. Isaiah 38v1-22, John 14v11-15, 15v4-14.

2) Through church elders praying a prayer of faith.

James 5v13-16. This is the usual way that a Christian should expect to be healed. The Greek word for "sick" in James 5v15 is "kamno," is translated "wearied" in Heb 12v3, and "Fainted" in Rev 2v3; it speaks of a person being "worn out" by sickness, and does not necessarily mean that a person is bed-fast. Some say that we have no warrant to anoint unbelievers, as Mark 6v13 was to Israel, and Matt 15v26. tells us that healing is "the children's bread." However, these same Israelites were looked upon in Matt 10v6 as "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," who needed Christ's salvation. The anointing with oil signifies the power of the Holy Spirit, and this comes upon both unbelievers and believers to heal them. If the elders pray for Christians and there is a succession of failures in healing, the church should really seek the Lord to find out why this is happening, a church should not rest content until it is seeing the sick healed.

3) Through any believer.

Mark 16v18. Any believer who really believes can lay hands on the sick and see them recover. However, if there is no faith or spiritual power, nothing will happen, we cannot give what we have not got. We have to be in close touch with God, we can't expect the gifts of healings to manifest themselves if we are careless or prayerless. If we try to bring healing to people when we are in a powerless spiritual condition, and have nothing to give, we shall discourage both the sick person and ourselves as well. To know ourselves is very difficult but necessary task when we are dealing with the sick. 2Cor 13v5, James 1v22.

4. Through an evangelist who has a continual healing ministry to the sick.

This gift is part and parcel of New Testament and apostolic ministries, 1Cor 12v28, 2Cor 12v12, Rom 15v18-20, Mark 16v15-20, Luke 9v1,2, 10v1-9. These greater ministries are usually entrusted with the greater manifestations of the gifts of healings.

So we can see that whether we are an Elder, Evangelist, or ordinary Christian, if we live close to God we can pray for the sick in the name of Jesus. John 15v16, 16v23, Acts 3v6,16, 4v10,12. Each healing is a separate gift, i.e. if we pray for ten people and all of them are healed, ten gifts of healings have been ministered. A gift of healing can be ministered by the laying on of hands, by a touch, by a word, or even by garments that have been prayed over by a person who is full of God's power. Matt 8v8,13-17, 9v24,25,29,30, Mark 6v5,6, Acts 19v11,12. Peter was so full of the power of God that when he got close enough to people for his shadow to fall on them, those who were sick were healed. Those who would minister to the sick must be full and keep full of the Holy Spirit. Acts 5v15,16. The great value of gifts of healings in evangelism is clearly seen in the Scriptures.

They display the wonderful character and grace of God.

The God of love longs to meet the needs of fallen humanity, God does not like to see people suffer; He longs to save and heal fallen humanity. Christ came to destroy all the works of the Devil, and to show the world what He and the Father were like. 1John 3v8, Acts 10v38, Luke 4v18,19, John 14v7-10. The healing of disease and infirmity by this gift greatly glorifies the Lord, and makes a powerful appeal to people to return to such a wonderful and loving God. Mark 2v3-12, Acts 4v21. Paul tells us that people are blinded by Satan and need these signs and wonders to see what God is like. 2Cor 4v3-7, Rom 15v17-20. This brings us to our next point.

Gifts of healings confirm the Gospel message.

This is the most common of the New Testament signs and wonders, it makes people come and see what is happening and compels them to listen to the Gospel message. Matt 4v23-25. This gift shows that the Gospel is true and the Lord Jesus is alive and can save and forgive sins, and that the tremendous truths about Heaven and Hell and sin and judgement are true. Mark 2v1-12, John 10v36-38, Acts 3v13-16,18-26. This gift certainly turns people to the Lord. Acts 8v5-8,13, 9v32-35. The manifestation of gifts of healings really inspires the people of God and gives them a holy boldness in the preaching of the Gospel. Acts 4v29-31. This gift makes all the difference between defeat and victory to the saints, particularly in time of persecution. The thing that we should always remember is that we are channels of gifts of healings purely because of the grace of God and shed blood of Christ, the Lord Jesus is the only one who has manifested spiritual gifts because He merited them. For those who are sick we will now do a brief study on why we can expect God to heal us, those who want a more detailed can read my book "Jesus Christ the Healer."

God Desires To Heal You.

Your sickness may be due to heredity, Satan, your sin, neglect or overwork of your body, natural ageing of your body, worry, the pressure of life, emotional stress, infection and disease, industrial poisoning, injury, accident or war. However, whatever the cause of your sickness, unless your time has come to die, God desires to heal you, as the following facts and Scriptures clearly show.

1) The original creation shows God's desire and will for mankind to enjoy perfect health.

It is the fall and sin of man that has made creation subject to sickness and unreality. Rom 8v19-22. God not only made the human body self-healing, He also gave the tree of life to preserve perfect health. Adam's sin deprived mankind of the tree of life and physical well being, and by breaking God's moral and health laws, mankind has suffered further physical deterioration. Gen 3v22, Deut 28v15-29,45-48,58-68, Prov 13v2,15, Gal 6v7. Christ came to redeem us from the curse of a broken law, and by accepting Him as Lord and Saviour we can be saved and healed. Gal 3v13,14. The Scriptures tell us that one glad day God's kingdom of love will come to earth and God's earthly creation will enjoy perfect health forever. Rev 21v3-5, 22v2.

2) God looks upon sickness and death as evil things and enemies of mankind and His perfect will. 1Cor 15v26, 1Thess 5v23, 3John v2.

Sickness, like any other trial and temptation, may produce spiritual strength in us, when we overcome it by God's grace, but it is still an evil thing. God speaks of sickness as an oppression of Satan, a curse, a bondage and captivity, from which Christ has come to deliver us. Luke 4v17-21, 13v10-17, Acts 10v38, 1John 3v8, Job 2v7-13, 42v10.

3) God so desired the Israelites to enjoy good health, that He gave them sound medical laws to preserve their health.

God gave the Israelites laws of rest, food, and hygiene, sanitation and quarantine, as well as moral law, to preserve their health. Prov 4v20-22, Lev 23v1-44, 25v1-24 with Mark 2v23-28; Lev 11v32,39,40, 15v1-33; Deut 23v12,13; Lev 13v1-59, Num 5v1-4; Lev 11v1-47. God also gave them the promise of divine healing. Exodus 15v26. If physical neglect or overwork has made you ill, then you need to observe the practical medical advice given in the

Law of God, and give your body adequate food, rest and sleep. Psalm 103v3,5, 127v2. God can heal you if you have neglected your body, but he does expect you to be sensible and to use your common sense. Phil 2v25-27, Psalm 107v4-6,8,17-21.

4) The character, compassion and love of God assure that God earnestly desires to heal us.

See Psalm 103v1-22, 146v5-10, Matt 6v25-34, John 1v14. It is not sickness, but the healing of sickness by the power of God, that glorifies God and shows His perfectly loving will and character. Sickness is Satan's will for God's creation. Acts.10v38. It causes many people to love and glorify God when they realise God's complete dedication and sacrificial love for His creation, and divine healing makes them realise this glorious fact. Mark 2v12, Luke 13v10-17, Mark 15v31, John 11v4,40,45, 1John 4v8, Rev 4v8.

5) The cross of Christ shows how earnestly God desires to save and heal us.

We can claim healing for soul and body through Christ's atonement. Isaiah 53v4 with Matt 8v16,17, Num 21v5-9 with John 3v14-16, 1Peter 2v24, Exodus 15v26. God desires to deliver us from sin and sickness and give us His good gifts. Matt 7v11, Luke 11v9-13.

6) Christ revealed God's willingness to heal you by healing all who came to Him, and His early Church did the same.

See Matt 8v16,17, 14v13,14, Acts 5v12-16. Christ is alive, and He desires to do the same miracles today that He did while He was on earth; He is just as able and willing to heal you today. John 20v21, Mark 16v15-18, Heb 13v8. You can receive healing from Christ through your own prayers, Isaiah 38v1-22, John 14v11-15, 15v4-14; through the prayers of others, even if you are separated from those praying for you by a great distance, Mark 16v17,18, Matt 8v5-13, 9v29,30, 14v35,36, John 4v46-54; by a prayer cloth, etc., prayed over and sent to you, Acts 19v11,12, 2Kings 13v20,21; through a spoken word of commanding faith, Matt 8v8, Acts 3v6; or by an act of obedience at Christ's direction. Mark 7v32-37, Luke 17v12-19, John 9v1-15, Num 21v5-9. God can use any of these channels to heal you, so bring your sins and sickness to Christ He earnestly desires to save and heal you. Carefully and prayerfully consider the next three points.

a) Repent of all your sin and come in sincere repentance to Christ.

Accept Jesus as your Saviour, if you do not already know Him as Saviour. Acts 3v19, 13v38,39, John 1v12, 3v16, Heb 7v25. Christ emphasised the supreme importance of getting right with God and being "born again," and He told us that there is a vital connection between repentance, forgiveness and healing. Mark 2v5,9,10, John 5v1-9,14, Rom 12v1,2, 1John 3v21-24, 1Cor 11v27-32. If you have any bitterness or enmity against others, forgive them, for God has to forgive your sins, otherwise it could well hinder or stop you receiving your healing. Matt 6v12,14,15, 18v35, Mark 11v22-26, Luke 17v1-17. Get right with God and man and come in full assurance of faith for healing to God, through Christ's shed blood your sin can be forgiven and your body healed. Matt 5v22-24, Luke 24v47, Rom 8v32, 1Peter 2v24, 1John 1v9, Heb 10v19-22.

b) Be absolutely positive in your faith in Christ and God the Father.

See Heb 11v5,6, Mark 5v25-34, 6v56. Praise and thank God for His promise to heal you. Mark 11v20-24, 2Cor 1v19,20. Don't come to God with doubting hope; come to Him with positive faith. Don't wait for thrills, feelings or sight, before you believe, believe God's Word and resist Satan's lies and God will meet with you. God really wants you to be well, so reject false tradition that teaches that God wants you to be sick. 1Peter 5v6-11, James 4v7. Let your confession of faith be as positive as the Word of God, and believe God's Word even when circumstances seem to deny it. John 20v27-29, 2Cor 4v18, 5v7, Rom 4v20. God is faithful, He is able and willing to heal all those who truly repent and come to Him in full assurance of faith, no matter what Satan, false church tradition, senses, or circumstances may say. 1John 5v9-15, Mark 9v22,23.

c) Continue to trust Christ for a miracle even when healing is not immediate.

Sometimes healing is delayed or is gradual, but remember that God promises that real faith never goes unrewarded. Mark 11v20-25. Imitate the persistent faith and prayer of the woman of Matt 15v21-28, the Shunammite woman of 2Kings 4v18-37, the sick woman of Mark 2v25-34, the blind men of Luke 18v35-43, the friends of the palsied man of Mark 2v1-12. Remember, even God's great servant Job experienced a delay in healing, and that Epaphroditus was not healed immediately, even though Paul prayed for him. but they were both healed. Job 42v10, Phil 2v25-30, Luke 17v11-19. Even the Lord Jesus prayed for one blind person twice, and other people received their healing a short while after being prayed for. Mark 8v22-26, Luke 17v12-19, John 9v1-15. Above all you must remember to direct your faith to God, and not to the person who prays for you and when God heals you, give Him **ALL** the glory. Acts 3v11-13, 14v7-21.

We will finish this study on the gifts of healings with a quotation from page 57 of C.L. Parker's book "Covert

Earnestly"; "There is no instance in the Bible refusing either salvation or healing to anyone who was able to accept it: and delay is not denial."

The Gift Of Prophecy.

The gift of prophecy is sixth in the list in 1Cor 12v8-10, however, Paul tells us that prophecy is the gift that Christians are to desire the most, because it can greatly edify the church. 1Cor 14v1-3.

1) The normal gift of prophecy must not be confused with prediction.

This is the province of the word of wisdom and knowledge. A prophecy may contain these greater gifts, but normal prophecy through the simple gift of prophecy is to edify, exhort, and comfort. 1Cor 14v3. Unless a person has a ministry of words of wisdom and knowledge, they have no right or authority from God to be called a "seer" or claim a prophetic office, which brings us to our next point:

2) The normal gift of prophecy must not be confused with the office of a prophet.

The prophet in the local church with the simple gift of prophecy and perhaps an occasional manifestation of the gifts of revelation, has a prophetic ministry to the local church; the prophet with a continual ministry of the gifts of revelation as well as the simple gift of prophecy has more than a local ministry and has a prophetic office in the universal Church, and is second only to an apostle in authority. Eph 4v11, Acts 13v1. In the Old Testament those who had a vision ministry were called "seers," i.e. they were taught by visions, those who have a ministry to others by means of a continual vision ministry are not manifesting the simple gift of prophecy, they are manifesting the gifts of revelation, some have no authority from God to manifest this kind of ministry. Rom 12v6. There is a considerable difference between the prophetic ministry of Agabus and the prophetic gift of Philip's four daughters in Acts 21v9,10. Some have no authority to predict like Agabus and must not try. Rom 12v6, Eph 4v11. Even those with a prophetic ministry can vary a great deal in their manifestation of spiritual gifts; some have much more authority than others. Num 12v6-15.

3) Prophecy is not to be confused with preaching or preaching.

Those who preach expound God's revealed Word; those who prophesy speak the mind of the Holy Spirit under His direct influence.

Grimm and Thayer in their New Testament Lexicon, (1896 Ed.) say: "Propheteuo" (to prophesy) is.... d. To break forth under divine impulse in lofty discourse or in praise of the divine counsels."

And under the word "prophetes," Grimm and Thayer explain that the Christian prophets were those who "in religious assemblies of the Christians, being suddenly seized by the Spirit (whose promptings however do not impair their self government, 1Cor 14v32.) give utterance in glowing and exalted but intelligible language to those things which the Holy Spirit teaches them, and which have power to instruct, comfort, encourage, rebuke, convict and stimulate their hearers."

Bishop Ellicott, in his critical and Grammatical Commentary on 1 and 2 Thessalonians (4th. Ed. 1880,) on 1Thess 5v20. points out that prophecies were "declarations of the divine counsels and expositions of God's oracles, immediately inspired by and emanating from the Holy Spirit....The difference between ordinary didache and propheteia consisted in this, that the latter was due to the immediate influence of the Spirit, the former to an exoikeias dialegesthai (speaking out of one's own mind.)"

In the A.V. the word "propheteuo" (to prophesy,) is never translated as "preach." Matt 7v22, 11v13, 15v7, 26v68, Mark 7v6, 14v65, Luke 1v67, 22v64, John 11v51, Acts 2v17,18, 19v6, 21v9, 1Cor 11v4,5, 13v9, 14v1,3,4,5,24,31,39, 1Peter 1v10, Jude v14, Rev 10v11, 11v3., **nor is "propheteia" (prophecy) ever translated as "preaching," and "prophetes" ((prophet) is never translated as "preacher."**

The Greek words for "preach" are not used to speak of a person prophesying. They clearly speak of the telling forth of truth out of the mind by process of thought. The words that are used are: "Dialegomai," which means, "to speak throughout." Acts 20v7,9, 24v12,25, 17v2,17, 18v4,19, 19v8,9. "Diangelo," which means to tell or announce thoroughly. Luke 9v60. "Euangelizo," which means, "to tell good news, or good tidings." Luke 3v18, 4v43, 16v16, Acts 5v42, 8v4,12,35,40, Eph 3v8, Heb 4v2,6, Rev 14v6. etc. "Katangelo," which means "to tell thoroughly," it occurs in Acts 4v2, 13v5,38, 15v36, 16v17,21, 17v3,13,23, 26v23, Rom 1v8, 1Cor 2v1, 9v14, 11v26, Phil 1v16,18, Col 1v28. "Kerusso," which means "to cry or proclaim as an herald." Matt 3v1, 4v17,23, 9v35, 1Peter 3v19, etc. "Laleo," which means "to talk, discourse, or speak." Mark 2v2, Matt 13v3, Acts 8v25, 11v19, 13v42, 14v25, 16v6, etc. Paul said that God had ordained and appointed him as a preacher, ("kerux," a crier, or herald,) and Peter tells us that Noah was a "preacher of righteousness." "Kerux is only used in 1Tim 2v7, 2Tim 1v11 and 2Peter 2v5. See Rom 10v14, "preacher," "kerusso," to herald, as a public crier, especially divine truth (the gospel), in the K.J.V., it is translated as, preacher, preach, proclaim, publish.

The Old Testament also distinguishes a preacher from a prophet. The Old Testament prophet was a "nabi," or if a prophetess a "nebiah," they were also sometimes a seer, a "chozeh." Gen 20v7, Ezra 5v1, Exodus 15v20, 2Sam 24v11, 30v10, Ezek 13v9,16, Amos 7v12. These prophets prophesied, or should have prophesied the mind of God, sometimes God was very angry with people because they said they were prophesying when they gave their own thoughts instead of God's thoughts. 2Chron 18v11, Jer 14v14, 23v21,25,26,32, 27v10,14. The prophet is one who allowed God to flow forth His thoughts through them, "naba" means "flow forth," sometimes these words were good tidings, sometimes they were words of judgement, and the true prophets were not afraid to proclaim what God had told them. There is a great difference between the prophet, who told God's thoughts, and the preacher who proclaims obvious wisdom like Solomon did, Solomon was a preacher, a "qoheleth." Eccles 1v1,2,12, 7v27, 12v8,9,10. Both preacher and prophet proclaim, but the source of the prophet's message is the Holy Spirit, the source of the preacher's message is his mind. Psalm 40v9, Isaiah 61v1, Neh 6v7, Jonah 3v2. So we can see that to call "prophecy" by the name of "preaching" is quite unjustified, they are looked upon as two quite distinct things in the Scriptures.

Robinson's Lexicon makes the following helpful note on "prophetes," (prophet):

"In Sept. and New Testament "prophetes" corresponds to Hebrew "nabi," one who speaks from a divine influence, under inspiration, whether as foretelling future events, or as exhorting, reproving, threatening individuals or nations, i.e. as the ambassador of God and the interpreter of His will to men;... With the Jewish use of "nabi" and "prophetes" was connected the idea, that the prophet spoke not his own thoughts, but what he received from God, retaining however his own consciousness and self- possession." End of quote.

Prophecy and preaching are two quite distinct ministries in the Scriptures; those with a prophetic ministry are next to apostles in authority, and before teachers, Greek "didaskaloi." 1Cor 12v28, Eph 4v11. Paul was an apostle, prophet and teacher. 1Tim 2v7, 2Tim 1v11, 4v3, 2Cor 12v1-4, 1Cor 15v51-53. This shows that God can give to some both ministries of prophet and teacher, even though they are usually quite distinct ministries.

4) Prophecy can have many purposes and vary a great deal in importance.

Prophecy can be used in prayer and worship as well as in the edification, exhortation and comfort of believers. The Scriptures also show that the message of some prophets is much more important than the message from other prophets. Rom 12v6. God gives some prophets prophecies that are of a local and only temporary significance, however, He gives other prophets prophecies that are of national or international importance. As we have seen some prophets have a prophetic office and are used by God to continually minister on the level of words of wisdom and knowledge, and they have a prophetic ministry that goes beyond the bounds of the local church,

There is a real danger of being sceptical about prophecies, and Christians can look upon prophecy as a rather beautiful and pleasant thing, but without any real importance, however, even though the simple gift of prophecy is not as important as the prophetic office, it has an important place in the local church. Even Timothy was not attaching the importance to prophetic revelation that he should have done. 1Tim 4v14,15, 2Tim 1v6-8. We should never despise genuine prophesying. 1Thess 5v19,20. The idea that no real notice should be taken of prophetic utterances is quite perilous and reveals a real spirit of scepticism and unbelief. The people who ignored the Old Testament prophets got into real trouble and ended up in defeat and captivity. 2Chron 36v15-21. Jehoshaphat knew that to prosper, you had to believe the Word of God through the prophets of God. 2Chron 20v20. The fact that prophets are placed second to apostles in the New Testament, shows the importance of prophecy in New Testament churches. The New Testament apostles are really a kind of prophet, they manifested spiritual gifts, that in the Old Testament would have resulted in them being called prophets, but they also have the New Testament commission from Christ to evangelise and pioneer churches. If we ignore genuine prophetic utterances, it can have the most serious consequences; Paul got into real trouble by ignoring the prophecies of local believers and prophetic warning of Agabus the prophet. Acts 21v10-13, 22v17,18,21, 16v29. If the seven churches in the book of Revelation had only taken heed to the Holy Spirit as He spoke through the prophets in these churches, they would have not got into the shocking state that some of them did get into. However, having said all this, we have to recognise that false prophecy took place among the Old Testament people of God, and it has also plagued the New Testament Church, and so we need to take heed to the following warnings.

a) We must not surrender our right to judge prophetic utterances.

We have the right and duty to judge prophetic utterances. 1Thess 5v19-21, 1Cor 14v29-33. This not only means that we should decide which part of a prophetic message applies to ourselves, it also means that we have the right to judge if a prophecy is from the Lord. We can, and should, reject anything that comes from the human mind alone, or from evil spirits. Jer 23v16,25-34, 1Kings 22v19-30. Even Ahab knew that only Micaiah was telling the truth, and the Holy Spirit will always witness to the truth. 1John 2v26,27, Rev 2v20-25. Important prophetic truth will be confirmed out of the mouths of two or three reliable witnesses. Deut 19v15, 2Cor 13v1 with 1Cor 14v29. The mature spiritual members of the local church will preserve their church from error due to immaturity and fanaticism,

if they keep close to God. Most of the false cults that have arisen have come into being by someone making a false claim to exclusive inspiration from God or the spirit world, and multitudes have been deceived by Satan, because they have unconditionally surrendered their right to judge these "revelations." Christians should not make this same dreadful mistake, Paul tells us to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good." 1Thess 5v20,21.

b) Prophecies, which tell us what to do, should be regarded with caution and carefully examined.

For in the New Testament, direction usually comes direct to the sons of God from their heavenly Father. Rom 8v14, Heb 9v10,11. However, God may speak through others by the gifts of the Spirit to confirm guidance that He has already given to us, or He may use others to warn us in an emergency or danger, as Agabus warned Paul. Notice, Agabus did not tell Paul what to do, even though the Christians at Tyre warned Paul not to go to Jerusalem, Agabus confirmed what had already been revealed to Paul. Acts 20v22,23, 21v3,4,10,11. We thank God for the guidance that He gives us through the gifts of the Spirit, it can be very precious, and it will be none the less precious if we approach other Christian's revelations about ourselves with caution. Acts 11v28, 16v6-11. (I consider other Scriptural safeguards in the manifestations of spiritual gifts in my book "The Baptism and Gifts of the Spirit," under the heading "Reception of the Gifts," so those who desire further information upon this point can read this book.)

The simple gift of prophecy is not given for guidance, though it may sometimes confirm guidance, if it is a channel of the revelation gifts. The New Testament prophet foretells, warns in emergency, but does not direct Christian's lives; the New Testament Christian with the simple gift of prophecy does not usually foretell.

c) Prophecy does not replace or take precedence over Scripture.

Prophecies have to be checked by the Scriptures, it is a false reverence to accept prophecies without any Scriptural test or question. 1John 4v1-5. A person may say "Thus saith the Lord," but we still have to check what they say by the Scriptures. It is quite all right to say, "Thus saith the Lord," for anybody who prophesies, should not prophecy unless they absolutely feel that they have a message from God. It is not the words "Thus saith the Lord," that decide the authenticity of a person's prophecy, it is their conformity to the Scripture and their manifest power and authority. In Jeremiah's day people professed to speak for God, but their words were light and untrue, so different from God's words, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Jer 23v28-32. God's words are full of life and power and quicken and challenge the soul, Heb 4v12, and in this respect the Scriptures are supreme, those who tamper with the Scriptures do it to their own destruction. 2Peter 3v16. The Church is built upon the Scriptures given to the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles, and particularly the truth revealed by our Saviour. Eph 2v20, 3v5. No one can receive truth that will add to or supersede the New Testament revelation. Rev 22v18,19.

Definition: Prophecy is a supernatural utterance given by the Holy Spirit that can take the form of exhortation, encouragement, prayer or song. It is not the product of a person's processes of thought; it is a revelation from God. Its main purpose is to edify and encourage the church. There may be prediction channelled through this gift on occasions, when the prophecy contains words of wisdom and knowledge. Prophecy enables God to meet hidden needs in the church. A prophecy may contain something that the prophet already knows, which God desires to be spoken to help others, or it may contain some revelation that the prophet was previously unaware of. However, whatever the content of the prophecy, a true prophecy will be endured with Divine life and power. Prophecy enables God to speak to man; the word "prophet" describes someone who is the mouthpiece of God. 1Cor 14v2. A church is not Pentecostal if it does not manifest spiritual gifts, and in particular the gift of prophecy. There is a spirit of expectancy if the gifts are powerfully manifested, and when the Holy Spirit speaks words of tender comfort through a loving heart, the very peace of Heaven is ministered.

The Use Of Prophecy.

1) It enables God to edify, exhort, and comfort the Church. 1Cor 14v3-5.

Paul says that the first use of the simple gift of prophecy is to "edify" the Church, i.e. prophecy is used by God "to build up" the Church in character, love and spiritual strength. If the divine Architect is to build up His Church, as He desires this gift must be in operation, for lacking it the Church cannot be built up, as it should. Matt 16v16,18, Eph 2v21,22, Rev 2v7,11,17,29, 3v6,13,22.

The Greek word for "exhortation" in 1Cor 14v3 is "paraklesis," which means "a calling to one's side, a calling near, an invitation," and it is used in the New Testament in the following ways. a) As an appeal, petition or entreaty. 2Cor 8v4,17. b) As an exhortation, encouragement, and admonition 1Thess 2v3, 1Tim 4v13, Acts 13v15, Heb 12v5, 13v22. c) As a consolation, comfort and solace. Luke 6v24, Acts 9v31, Rom 15v4,5, 2Cor 1v4-7, 7v4,7,13, Phil 2v1, 2Thess 2v16,17, Philemon v7, Heb 6v18. Prophecy may take any of these three forms and can bring tremendous blessing to the churches. The word "paraklesis" is closely related to "parakletos," which is translated as "Comforter" in John 14v16,26, 15v26, 16v7, and "advocate" in 1John 2v1, both words speak of a care, comfort and consolation that is most precious.

The Greek word for "comfort" in 1Cor 14v3 is "paramuthia," which means "to speak near or close to anyone," and carries an even greater degree of tenderness than the word "paraklesis." "Paramuthia" only occurs here in the New Testament, however, "paramuthion" occurs in Phil 2v1, and is translated as "comfort" in the A.V. By using the word "paramuthia" Paul was showing us that the Holy Spirit comes to speak very kindly to the people of God, to soothe, pacify, and speak very graciously, persuasively and tenderly to the Church. Prophecy from the Lord builds up and comforts, it is gracious and tender, and is not critical or harsh. There may be rebuke, as in Rev 3v16,17, but Christ will be gracious with His own, even in His disciplines.

C.L. Parker writes in his book "Covert Earnestly"; "There will from time to time come into any assembly members with hidden conflicts, fears and needs, which not even the best Pastor can, or ought to know. But again through a prophet, the Holy Spirit can reach where man cannot, and can say the very thing that needs saying. The letters to the seven churches supply many examples of this use of prophecy. The messengers of the seven churches, sent no doubt to convey the love of the churches to John in prison - for there was no postal system in those days - took with them what the Lord wished to say to each church in its own peculiar situation at the time. Thus the churches were built up or exhorted or comforted as the need might be."

We can all "learn" and all be "comforted," by the use of this gift. 1Cor 14v31. By this gift we can have prophecies given to us that enable us to fight a good fight against the powers of darkness. 1Tim 1v18. They can warn us of dangers to come, or encourage us with "exceeding great and precious promises."

2) The simple gift of prophecy can have a great effect when it is a channel of the gifts of revelation.

a) It can on occasions be of great value in winning the lost.

A prophetic utterance may contain a word of knowledge, the Holy Spirit can reveal the secrets of men's hearts, and so make it quite plain that God is speaking to them, the woman at the well was converted by this means, John 4v15-19,29,39-42, 1Cor 14v24,25. If this happened more often in evangelistic services a great many more people would be saved.

b) A prophecy may contain a word of wisdom or knowledge and so it can predict and warn of future events.

See Acts 11v27-30, 20v23, 21v4,10,11, 17v9-11,21-44, 21v5-28. Prophecy is spoken of as "a light in a dark place," and it can prepare one for either a great blessing or for great trouble, and can be the means of showing the people of God what to do under certain circumstances. 2Peter 1n19. Not every word of wisdom or knowledge has to be spoken out to the church, or spoken at all; but sometimes it is necessary for them to be spoken to meet the needs of the members of the church.

c) Prophecy was used by God to form much of the Holy Scriptures. 2Peter 1v18-21.

"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Obviously no prophecy can carry the same authority or importance as the Scriptures, but prophecy can meet real needs in the churches of God.

There is a limit laid down to prophesying in the local church.

God does not desire one prophet to give all the prophecies and monopolise a Christian meeting. In 1Cor 14v29, Paul says "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge," Paul is saying, among other things, that after two or three prophets have spoken, the local church should deliberate and weigh what has been said. The utterances of two or three prophecies will usually meet the needs of the local church, and contain quite sufficient material for the members of the local church to think upon and remember. However, Paul does say in 1Cor 14v24,31 that all the prophets in a local church meeting can prophesy, "If all prophesy," and "ye all may prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted," v31. However, here we need to remember that in 1Cor 14, Paul is not thinking of a large evangelistic or convention service. Paul is writing on the manifestation of spiritual gifts in the context of the communion service of 1Cor 11v18-34, which in Paul's day almost always took place in a home and was, therefore, a comparatively small gathering. **NB:** 1Cor 16v19, Col 4v15, Philemon v2. All the prophets in a large public gathering certainly can't be allowed to prophesy, but in a small house or church meeting, where there are only a small number of prophets it may occur. The Scriptures contain several instances where many people have prophesied at one time during special outpourings of the Holy Spirit. The 70 elders of Israel prophesied at one "meeting." Num 11v24-29. See 1Sam 10v10-13, 19v18-24, 2Kings 2v3,5, Acts 19v6. However, this is the exception, not the rule; we should not make this the Christian norm; nor should we say it is out of order when it does occasionally take place.

When Paul said in 1Cor 14v24,31, that all the believers could prophecy in one meeting, he was not only speaking in the context of a comparatively small house-meeting with a limited number of prophets present, he was speaking of a very much longer meeting than the short 1 hour services of today. We see in Acts 20v6-12, that Paul's meeting at Troas lasted right through the night for at least eight hours and included long preaching by Paul, prayer and worship during the breaking of bread, and long spiritual conversation and discussion. We can see in the light of such a long meeting how Paul could say that the limited number of local prophets could all prophecy if they observed his rule to judge, weigh and assimilate what had been prophesied. How few churches really consider and weigh what has been spoken in prophecy.

Are we to restrict all services to three prophecies regardless of their type or length?

If we do then we have to answer the following searching and pertinent questions. Are we to treat a day or night of prayer to the same restriction as a one-hour meeting devoted to Bible study? Is it all right to have three more prophecies if we have a small break in the service or prayer time? Does the number of prophecies allowed depend on how many artificial breaks we make in a service, or between services? Can we have twelve prophecies by dividing one six-hour service, up into four services? How big a break do we have to have between meetings before we can have three prophecies again, two hours or ten minutes? I am not being sarcastic, I am just pointing out the difficulties and problems that arise if we try to limit every meeting to two or three prophecies regardless of its nature or length. Paul's approach is by far the best, we should only have as many prophecies as we can judge, weigh, assimilate and remember. In the normal 1 or 2 hour services that are devoted to preaching, three prophecies and three interpretations of tongues are usually more than enough for most people to assimilate and remember.

We should not allow ourselves to get into the state of the Corinthians, spoken of by Paul in 1Cor 14v26, where everyone wanted to monopolise the meetings and they all usually suffer from a lack of spiritual gifts, not an excess of them, but let us avoid like the plague any kind of spiritual selfishness. Let us endeavour to keep a sensible balance and order and aim at the building up and blessing of others. Those who walk close to God may be able to tell or prophecy of many things that the Lord has spoken personally to them since their last gathering together in Christian fellowship. However, these personal dealings of God may not be intended for others, so in a Christian fellowship we have to follow Paul's rule and speak out and prophecy only what is relevant, important and essential at the time, and what the Holy Spirit inspires us with at the time. Prophecy does not come as an uncontrollable or irrepressible utterance, nor is there any suspension of the mind and will; the spirit of the prophet is subject to the control of the prophet and to the judgement of other prophets. 1Cor 14v29,31.

Prophecy has a greater ministry in the church than the gift of tongues. So Paul writes in 1Cor 14v1, "Make love your quest, and be eager for spiritual gifts, but chiefly for prophecy." Weymouth. See also. 1Cor 14v39.

The Gift Of Tongues.

This is spoken of in the New Testament as "new tongues," "other tongues," "divers kinds of tongues," and even as "the tongues of men and angels." Mark 16v17, Acts 2v4, 1Cor 12v10,28, 13v1. It is a precious gift from God.

1) The gift of tongues is certainly not gibberish.

To say that speaking with tongues by a blood-washed, Spirit-filled Christian is "gibberish," or "of the Devil," is to come very close to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Nothing could be further from the truth than to call speaking with tongues, "gibberish," for those who have been able to understand the languages that Christians have spoken while speaking with tongues, have said that they are perfect. For example, a ten-year-old girl named Irene Piper was enabled by the Holy Spirit to speak to a Chinese man in his own language. He was told that he was to come to church and accept salvation. The Chinese man said that "her accent was perfect, and her forms of speech were so exact that ten years study would not give the average Occidental such knowledge of the language." This is confirmed by Acts 2v6,8, where it is said that the 120 disciples spoke in not only different languages but in different dialects. These believers were mainly illiterate people who knew only one dialect of one language, yet they were speaking in different languages and different dialects of the same language. We are told that the Medes and Elamites (Persians), spoke the same language but with different dialects. "Dialektos" occurs only in the book of Acts: Acts 1v19, 2v6,8, 21v40, 22v2, 26v14, the other word for language is "glossa," i.e. "tongue," and is used for the organ of the body known as the tongue, the tongues of fire, as well as a language. Mark 7v33,35, 16v17, Acts 2v3,4,11,26, 10v46, 19v6, 1Cor 12v10,28,30, 13v1,8, 14v2,4,5,6,9,13,14,18,19,22,23,26,27,39, Rev 7v9. etc.

"Glossolalia," speaking with tongues, is certainly not like the incoherent, unmeaning, broken ramblings of some wild false religions. It is the intelligent speaking of God's mysteries, i.e. God's hidden secrets and purposes. The disciples at Pentecost spoke fluently and powerfully of God's wonderful works, it was only those who did not understand the language who said that it was drunken gibberish, those who did understand it said it was perfect and inspiring language and were converted as a result. It was the hearers of tongues who were "beside themselves," amazed and "ecstatic," not the speakers in tongues. "existemi," Acts 2v7,12, 10v45. "ekstasis," Acts 3v10, Mark 5v42,

16v8, Luke 5v26, Acts 10v10, 11v5, 22v17. The person who is worshipping God in tongues will sometimes have real depths of feeling, but the Holy Spirit will never cause them to lose control of themselves, He is a perfect gentleman.

Sometimes even Christians who have been filled with the Spirit and spoken in tongues doubt their experience because they seem to repeat again and again certain sentences or phrases in their unknown tongue. These Christians should realise that in their native tongue they do not use an extensive vocabulary when they are praising the Lord. Many Christians just say, "Praise the Lord," "Wonderful Jesus," etc., they do not use a great many words to express their worship and praise.

Here is an extract from page 32 and 33 of W.F.P. Burton's book "Signs following." This extract shows that on occasions the Holy Spirit may inspire us to speak only a few words, but that these words can reach the very highest levels of praise and express the very deepest love and devotion for God.

"In 1921 the Pastor of a meeting in Toronto, Canada, confided in me, "Brother Burton, there is something I do not understand in our assembly. When the meeting is warmed up into a real fervency of spirit a woman bursts out into an ejaculation. It never varies, and it seems to me like nonsense. She says in a kind of intonation 'Kalomboo Vidye. Vidyeeee Kalombo.' I don't like to stop her. What would you do about it?' I said, 'Oh, do let me hear it, brother. That is an expression used by our natives in the highest respect to their big chiefs.' On my return to Lubaland I was much struck by the monotonous regularity with which the village counsellors keep up an excited 'Kalombo Vidye,' in reverence to their chiefs during sessions of the court, and one can well understand both what an ejaculation of loving worship it was on the woman's part and also how it might have puzzled her Pastor." End of quote.

This shows how careful we have to be in judging utterances in tongues that seem repetitive and sound very peculiar. Many languages sound like utter nonsense to those who do not understand them, indeed, some sound so primitive, that even the best and most intelligent linguist might doubt the genuineness of what is in reality a complicated, beautiful and meaningful language. Even the very greatest linguist knows but a fraction of the world's languages. "World Digest" informs us that there have existed at least 6,760 languages, and only 2,296 are still spoken. There are, then, 4,464 dead languages on earth, which one could speak in other tongues, besides the tongues of angels of which we are told nothing except that there are obviously many of them as Paul speaks of them in the plural in 1Cor 13v1. It is a fact that children of God have spoken by the Holy Spirit's inspiration, both modern and ancient languages, and linguists have understood them. However, we need to remember that God does not cast His pearls before swine; such manifestations like this are usually for the sincere and seeking heart. The gift of tongues was not given to enable people to preach in languages that they did not know, in Christ's time Greek was known throughout the Roman Empire, but it has always had a great effect as a sign to confirm the Gospel. The gift of tongues is certainly not gibberish; it is a lovely and precious manifestation of God the Holy Spirit.

2) The gift of tongues is certainly not a useless, unprofitable, and unimportant gift.

Every gift of God is precious and good, and the gift of tongues is certainly no exception, it can bring great blessing to us.

a) Diligently used the gift of tongues transforms our ability to pray and worship.

The gift of tongues enables the Christian to utter and fully express the otherwise indescribable longings of their soul and their unspeakable feelings of love for God. It gives the Christian the ability to pray to God and worship God as we ought, it frees us from the limits of human speech and knowledge, for the Holy Spirit Himself gives us the vocabulary and blessing to fully express the needs, feelings and desires of the soul. The gift of tongues enables the Christian to pray on a new level of prayer, for it is God praying through us to perform things exceeding more abundantly than we can ask or think.

b) Diligently used the gift of tongues transforms our appreciation of spiritual things.

It brings a new realisation of the value and power of the Scriptures, and a new insight into their meaning; indeed, it is only the Spirit-filled Christian who can really understand much of the experience of the New Testament early Church. The diligent use of the gift of tongues enables us to have a deeper level of fellowship with Christ and His Father, and to see and worship them in a new and deeper way. Through the use of this gift God the Holy Spirit edifies the soul and spirit and makes spiritual things real to the soul. Which brings us to our next point.

c) Diligently used the gift of tongues transforms the character and blesses the whole personality.

It is given to build faith and love in the soul and edify, bless and transform the character and life of the believer, as Paul said the person who speaks in tongues "edifies himself." 1Cor 14v14. It has the same effect in the prayer life and devotional life that prophecy has in the church. In blessing the soul and spirit it can have the most beneficial

effect on the body, it can throw off conscious and subconscious worries, and can relax and refresh a tired body and mind as well as bless the soul. Isaiah 28v11,12 with 1Cor 14v21 and Rom 8v11. The gift of tongues can defend us from spiritual foes and give us the victory over them, for through this gift the Holy Spirit Himself comes to our aid and ministers to our spiritual needs and makes the soul strong, i.e. edifies the soul.

d) Diligently and properly used it can transform a Christian meeting.

A powerful, love-laden tongue can greatly bless the church even before it is interpreted, and if the interpretation carries the same benediction, it can bring showers of blessing.

So we can clearly see that God intended the gift of tongues to be an immense aid to the devotional life and prayer life, and it is also very profitable in the church when it is correctly used. This explains why Paul used the gift of tongues more than any of the Corinthians. 1Cor 14v18. We will consider the value and use of the gift of tongues at greater length later; this will involve some repetition, but it will serve to impress upon our minds, the great blessing and benefits that the Holy Spirit can bestow upon us through the use of His precious gift.

3) The apostle Paul certainly did not reject, despise, or belittle the gift of tongues, and neither should we.

The apostle Paul spoke in tongues more than any of the Corinthians, he obviously looked upon it as absolutely indispensable and necessary for his spiritual welfare. 1Cor 14v18. Paul criticises the Corinthians selfish and noisy misuse of tongues in their public meetings, not the gift of tongues, and he instructs them to use the gift in the correct way. Paul certainly does not say in 1Cor 13v1, that the gift of tongues is unprofitable, he says that the selfish and noisy use of the gift of tongues in public does not profit the church. "The more excellent way" that 1Cor 12v31. tells us to walk in, is not the way of love severed from, or separate and distinct from all the other gifts, graces, attributes and talents; it is love as the motivating force and guiding principal of all these lovely and desirable things. It is certainly not, as some would have us to think, love in opposition to the gifts, or love without the gifts. It is the gifts of the Holy Spirit being sought and used out of the love of God and others.

It is very foolish to say, "You can seek the gifts, but I am going to seek for love." Those who seek for love from the God of love will also seek HIS gifts. The fact that a Christian lacks spiritual gifts does not mean that they possess love, indeed it may mean the very opposite, for it is impossible to follow after love and despise or criticise our heavenly Father's spiritual gifts. If we really desire and follow after love, we shall desire, follow after, and encourage spiritual gifts. We are not glorifying God by extolling love at the expense of the gifts that He has given. Paul does not say in 1Cor 13 that the gifts are "nothing" without love, for they are given by the God of love and are wonderful, it is the possessor that is "nothing." 1Cor 13v1-3. Spiritual gifts manifested in love profit both the recipient of the gift and others who are ministered to. It must be remembered that Paul said that without love, not only spiritual gifts, but also knowledge of sacred things, gifts to the needy, and even martyrdom for Christ's sake, are profitless to us without love. Though spiritual gifts lose some of their value without love, love is helpless without them. Love needs God's power to meet the needs of the broken in heart, the sick in body and the oppressed, and in the ministry of Jesus we see the lovely co-ordination of divine love and divine power meeting the needs of suffering humanity.

Paul does not say that the gift of tongues and other spiritual gifts are of little consequence because they are only temporary. In Heb.6v5. the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit are spoken of as "the powers of the age to come," so we can see that the gifts of the Spirit are a temporary and partial use of the powers of the eternal kingdom. The gifts of the Holy Spirit do not cease in the sense that there will never again be any miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit; the temporary manifestations of the Holy Spirit and the partial manifestations and revelations of God are swallowed up in the continuous and eternal enjoyment of the supernatural power and blessing of God. The part is swallowed up in the whole. The same way are present knowledge will come to nought, or vanish away, in the sense that our limited knowledge will be swallowed up in the infinite knowledge of God. Paul is telling us that the temporary and occasional manifestations of divine power through the gifts will be swallowed up in the continual, permanent and eternal manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Paul emphasises the need for gifts as well as love until the Lord Jesus comes and the kingdom of God is set upon earth. The temporary gifts help to produce eternal love and when they give way to the eternal and permanent manifestations of divine love power and wisdom. The gift of tongues is important because Paul says that it is given to produce love and faith in the soul, it is given to edify the believer, it is only like "roaring brass and clashing cymbal" when it is used in a selfish way by an unconsecrated and loveless Christian.

When Paul speaks in 1Cor 12v31 of prophecy and the other gifts as being "greater gifts" than the gift of tongues, he is speaking in the context of public meetings of Christians. For Paul makes it quite clear that the greatest gift in the devotional life of the believer is the gift of tongues. The diligent, devotional and loving use of the gift of tongues in the secret place will result in other gifts being manifested in public. 1Cor 14v2,4,18 with 2Cor 12v12. Paul spoke more in tongues than any of the verbose Corinthians so that he might edify his fellow-Christians in public; this was

one of the secrets of Paul's spiritual power and godly character. From his own experience Paul tells us that the gift of tongues will build love, faith and spiritual strength in the possessor of the gift, if it is used diligently and devotionally. Indeed, Paul states that it is the one gift whose primary aim is the spiritual well being of the possessor. A Christian cannot manifest the other gifts of the Spirit when he desires, and when they are manifested they are nearly always for the benefit of others, but he can speak in tongues when he desires and be spiritually edified as a result. Paul certainly did not disparage or belittle the gift of tongues; he used it very diligently and was greatly edified and spiritually blessed as a result.

It is a great tragedy that many Christians do not appreciate their heavenly Father's provision for them in His gift of speaking with tongues, indeed, it is a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to many Christians. Here are some of the reasons why they do not want to speak in tongues.

a) Some Christians are ignorant of the great blessing that this gift can bring.

They say, "What is the good of speaking with tongues? It is the least of the gifts." they feel that it is of no real benefit. This attitude shows that a person is ignorant of the Scriptures upon the subject, for the great benefits of this gift are shown in the New Testament. However, even if a Christian does not know the benefits of this gift as revealed in the Scriptures, they should not question the wisdom of God in giving this gift. They should say, "My heavenly Father has given this gift, so there must be some very good reason for it and some very profitable results of its manifestation, for God only gives good and perfect gifts." James 1v17. The gift of tongues may be the least important gift as regards to public ministry, but it is the greatest gift in relation to the devotional life and prayer life, which is the source of an anointed public ministry, so we can see that there is certainly nothing little about the gift of tongues.

b) Some Christians love the praise of men more than the praise of God. John 12v42,43.

Some Christians count the cost of losing friends who reject the Pentecostal experience, and so they also reject the lovely gift of tongues. Two young men who had dictated to the Lord, "We want the baptism in the Holy Spirit without speaking in tongues, were asked why they prayed in this manner, they replied that it was because speaking in tongues was unpopular. It is a sad thing that many more Christians are choosing to please men rather than God by criticising, avoiding and condemning the gift of tongues given by their Saviour and heavenly Father. Acts 2v4,33.

c) Some Christians have a fear of the supernatural.

Some Christians are frightened by the operation of spiritual forces, and they cannot trust God to give them "good gifts," to preserve them from dangers in the spiritual realm, so they prefer to stop in the wilderness instead of conquering their spiritual Canaan. The Lord Jesus stated that this attitude is due to a lack of faith in our heavenly Father's love and power. Matt 7v7-11, Luke 11v9-13. Comp. Heb 3 and 4.

Paul certainly never belittled speaking with tongues, and neither should we, he said that the gift of tongues, like any other gift, should be correctly used by Christians, and this brings us to our next point.

4) The gift of tongues should certainly not be misused.

Paul tells us that we should take special notice of the following.

a) We should not monopolise church meetings with speaking in tongues.

The aim in the church should be public and not private edification; therefore, we should curtail noisy or excessive speaking in tongues and seek God for a prophecy. 1Cor 14v5,18,19. We can use the gift of tongues in the church, but Paul says that we should usually speak quietly to ourselves and God. A background murmur of praise or speaking in tongues is quite all right as long as it does not hinder others praying or prophesying. 1Cor.14v40. Though the whole church may on occasions burst out in praise and worship and sing and speak in tongues; in a church meeting, speaking with tongues should generally be quietly spoken between ourselves and God. 1Cor 14v28. A Scriptural order will result in a greater measure of blessing on the church.

b) We should exercise special restraint when the unconverted or unlearned are present.

When the unconverted or people who are unlearned in spiritual gifts come into a Pentecostal meeting, the Pentecostal believers must act wisely and restrain themselves from any loud outbursts in tongues, otherwise the visitor will say that everybody is mad. 1Cor 14v23. If there is to be any public manifestation of the gift of tongues in such circumstances it must be by tongues and interpretation, however, Paul makes it quite clear in 1Cor 14v24,25, that prophecy is by far the best gift to manifest under such circumstances. The noisy use of the gift of tongues is particularly wrong when an outsider is in a meeting, and it will invariably produce consternation and criticism whereas, the use of the gift of prophecy may well result in the conviction and conversion of the "outsider." The gift of tongues is only a sign to the unbeliever when he can understand the language spoken in tongues.

c) We should set a definite limit to the number of tongues for interpretation.

Utterances in a tongue in the church that are for interpretation should be limited to three utterances, and if there is no interpreter in the church there must be no public utterances, the person must speak quietly to themselves and to God. 1Cor 14v27,28. Only one person should interpret each utterance even though several might be able to do so. It also definitely seems from 1Cor 14v16, "everyone hath a tongue," that Paul said that one person should only give one tongue; it is certainly a good thing to share the ministry of spiritual gifts. We should not speak an utterance for interpretation at all unless the Holy Spirit moves us in a very definite way, those who do insist on speaking without the Holy Spirit's direction, will find that there is very limited blessing on it.

Paul had several reasons for limiting tongues for interpretation to three. Paul did not want the Corinthians to have an excessive emphasis upon utterances in tongues; he desired them to have a correct and sensible balance, and to seek after prophecy and the other gifts. Paul also knew that three tongues for interpretation was as much as the Christians could remember, weigh and profit from. It is certainly a very sensible limitation, and if we observe this and the other limitations that Paul lays down, we will be preserved from fanaticism, selfishness and disorder, and we will enjoy a profitable manifestation of speaking with tongues.

5) We must not confuse devotional tongues with tongues given for a ministry to the Church.

It is a proven fact that only a small percentage of Christians, who speak with tongues, have a ministry in the church of "divers kinds of tongues." 1Cor 12v10. Only a small percentage of Christians who speak in tongues, speak out a tongue that is interpreted in the church. This is what Paul is speaking about in 1Cor 12v30, when he asks, "Do all speak with tongues?" The failure to distinguish between tongues that are for private edification, and tongues that are interpreted as a ministry to the church, has caused some critics of the Pentecostal experience to seize upon 1Cor 12v30, as an excuse for not speaking with tongues. However, Paul in 1Cor 12v27-31. is speaking of ministries that God has set in the church to build up the church, people with God-given gifts for public ministry, and the ministry of speaking tongues for interpretation is mentioned amongst them. There are Christians who have been given outstanding ministries of speaking with tongues, Christians whose utterances in tongues are of such great beauty and carry such a divine benediction that one feels that they are upon holy ground, even before there is any interpretation. The gift of tongues that is interpreted and ministers to the needs of the church is an enlargement of the ability to speak in a tongue, or tongues, that a Christian receives when they receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. However, all are not given this ministry, some quite properly, only use their tongue for private prayer and devotion, while others have in addition to this ministry for the church.

Definition.

The gift of tongues is the supernatural ability given by the Holy Spirit to speak in a tongue that is unknown to the speaker. The primary purpose of this gift is devotional; it is intended to be a divine aid to the prayer life. For though this gift can be used by God to speak to people in their own language, and when interpreted it can speak to the church; the person who speaks in an unknown tongue almost always, "Speaks not to men, but to God; for no man understands him." 1Cor 14v2.

The Value And Use Of The Gift Of Tongues.

Let us now consider the great blessing that come through the correct manifestation of this gift of Holy Spirit, these will clearly show why every Christian should desire to speak in tongues, and why God desires every Christian to speak with tongues.

1) Speaking with tongues brings into play the highest faculty of the Christian, the spirit.

Christ said that we must worship God with our spirit if we are to worship Him acceptably, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." John 4v23,24. The most elaborate and highly organised worship is only a dead form if the spiritual worship that Christ spoke of is missing. However, by the simple act of speaking with tongues we are enabled by the Holy Spirit to worship God on the very highest level, it is truly acceptable worship if we let love for God and others direct our lives. When the Holy Spirit enables us by this gift to magnify and bless God and to give God the love and worship of our hearts, He enables us to do the greatest thing that the Christian can do, for worship of God is the greatest act of the creature. Acts 10v46, Matt 22v35-40, Mark 12v28-34. The use of the gift of tongues lifts the Christian into a new realm of worship; it enables us to worship God to the limit of our capacity. Eph 4v18, Rom 8v26,27. We can also pray with our spirit, "If I pray in an unknown tongue my spirit prays." 1Cor 14v14. We can sing with the spirit, "I will sing with the spirit." 1Cor 14v16. So that we can see that the gift of tongues enables us to reach the highest levels of worship in spirit and truth, the very thing that Jesus said God desires. John 4v23,24. Spirit and truth worship is the most important act of the Christian life. How then, can some despise the gift of tongues and call it "The least of the gifts?"

2) The gift of tongues brings into the personal prayer life the ability of the Holy Spirit.

When you speak in tongues you are not limited by your own ability, God the Holy Spirit takes our needs, prayer, praise and desires, and the needs of other people and brings them to the Father. When we pray in tongues we can pray for deep needs that we do not know, and the burdens that would be too big for us and would shatter or overwhelm us if we knew them, we can bring them to God and have complete assurance of victory through the Holy Spirit's aid.

The gift of tongues is as important in the personal prayer life as prophecy is in the church. In the secret place the gift of tongues is the most important gift for personal deification, and the youngest convert and most mature Christian can build themselves up in their most holy faith by the use of this lovely gift. Jude v20,21. 1Cor 14v4,18. A diligent use of the gift of tongues in the private prayer life will result in a very blessed and fluent use of this gift. On occasions a completely new language will be given by the Holy Spirit, which possesses all the phonetics and rhythm of a perfect and complete language. However, whether the Holy Spirit gives us many or few words to express our praise or prayer, the exercises of the gift of tongues will bring great blessing and mighty power in prayer. When we use the gift of tongues our devotional life, we pray or praise as the Holy Spirit directs and in the way that He thinks best. We always pray for the right things in tongues, because we pray as the Holy Spirit directs, whereas, in our own tongue we can pray selfishly, ignorantly, incorrectly, and even with unsanctified ambition and denominational pride. When a Christian prays in tongues, it is prayer and worship on the very highest level. The balanced prayer-life demands praying and singing in tongues, as well as prayer and singing in one's own language. 1Cor 14v15.

In 1Cor 13v1 Paul implies that the Holy Spirit may cause us to speak in the tongues of angels. If an angelic tongue can express the praise of a great angelic being living in the eternal and uncreated glory and splendour of God's majestic presence, it can surely express the praise of the redeemed children of God living in this dark and sinful world. How wonderful it is to be freed from the limits of our own small vocabulary and limited eloquence, into the excellence and eloquence of earthly and even heavenly languages by the aid of the Holy Spirit. How wonderful to speak our praise on such a high plane. A gift that is of such importance in the prayer-life of the Christian should not be disparaged or termed little, least, or unimportant; such talk is a slight upon God, who is the giver of this good gift.

3) Speaking in tongues brings into operation the other gifts of the Spirit.

Prayer and praise builds up the spiritual life of the Christian to the place where they are able to manifest the other gifts of the Holy Spirit. The greater a person's ministry is, the more they need to speak in other tongues. One well known evangelist found that miracles were ceasing in his services because he had been neglecting speaking in tongues. Another well-known evangelist tells us that he does not expect much to happen unless he prays for several hours in tongues before he goes to the services. The Holy Spirit's ministrations through this gift in the secret place of prayer will result in a blessing upon one's public ministry. Matt 6v5,6 with 1Cor 14v4,18.

4) Speaking with tongues makes the Lord Jesus and God our Father very real to us.

Those who use this gift of tongues diligently in the secret place can testify that speaking with tongues really brings one close to our heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus, and it really deepens our love for them. What a precious gift this is! This alone would be a more than sufficient reason for desiring this gift. John 16v13-15. A gift that makes God the Father and God the Son more real and precious to the Christian should never be disparaged or belittled.

5) Speaking with tongues edifies the church when it is interpreted. 1Cor 14v5.

An anointed message in tongues can be a really wonderful blessing, and the interpretation can bring great comfort, solace and needful instruction. God has set this gift in the church as a valuable means of public as well as private edification.

6) The gift of tongues nourishes the spirit with divine truth.

Some people have said that the gift of tongues is the least of the gifts, or that it was "infant prattling" and not for mature Christians. However, the apostle Paul 24 years after his conversion was speaking in tongues more than the verbose Christians at Corinth and he was certainly not immature. 1Cor.14v18. Paul tells us that when we speak in tongues we speak "mysteries," i.e. the hidden counsels and secrets of God, which were once hidden, but are now revealed to the children of God. Matt 13v11, Luke 8v10, Rom 11v25, 16v25, 1Cor 2v1,7, 4v1, 14v2, 15v51, Eph 1v9, 3v3,4,9, 5v32, 6v19, Col 1v26,27, 4v3, 2Thess 2v7, 1Tim 3v9, Rev 10v7, Psalm 25v14. When we speak in tongues, we speak hidden and exalted spiritual truths; this is an exalted sphere of utterance. The hearers at Pentecost called these "mysteries," "The wonderful works of God;" they looked upon the utterances of the disciples as anything but "infant prattling," those who understood the languages were so awed and moved by the sublime words that they heard, that they became Christians. In 1Cor 13v11,12, Paul speaks of our present limited knowledge of the future heavenly "mysteries" as "infant prattling," but he never refers to speaking in tongues in this

way.

Our minds are limited in their ability to absorb and appreciate heavenly realities, our spirits are not limited in this way. Speaking in tongues enables our spirits to appreciate and feed on spiritual realities and Divine mysteries, and our spirits grow through the spiritual truths and blessings that come through speaking with tongues. This by-passes and rests the mind, so that even when we are too tired to think upon truth with our minds, our spirits and souls are nourished by the use of this gift. Isaiah 28v11,12, 1Cor 14v21. However, we cannot grow in God if we neglect the Scripture, its truth feeds our minds; so we should. "As new-born babes, for the pure milk that is for the mind eagerly crave, that thereby ye may grow unto salvation." 1Peter 2v2. Rotheram.

We will now give two instances where people have actually heard Christians speaking of the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" as they spoke in other tongues.

H. Horton writes on page 160 of his book, "The Gifts of the Spirit," what a missionary in the Congo heard when he was present at the baptism in the Spirit of a young coloured man. The missionary was amazed to hear the young man speaking in perfect English and repeating Old Testament instances of creation and history. The young man did not know a word of English and what is more, nothing of the accounts of Scripture that he was repeating. The missionary left the hut to search for his wife so that she could witness this remarkable manifestation of the Spirit. When he returned with his wife the young man was still speaking in English, and was speaking of the New Testament revelation concerning the second coming of Christ.

W.F.P. Burton gives an account of another inspiring incident that occurred at Mwanza in the Congo, on page 30 and 31 of "Signs following." When the churches were getting spiritually cold it was their practice to gather the believers together for several days of prayer, ministry of the Word and waiting upon God. During one such occasion Mr. Burton was keeping "a quiet eye" on the meeting to make sure that there was no "undue excitement or extravagance," when he was struck by the earnest expression of a young man named Ziba, who was obviously being deeply affected by the real power of the Holy Spirit which was moving upon the men gathered there. Mr. Burton quietly moved around to where the young man sat and was surprised and moved to hear Ziba speaking in absolutely perfect English of Christ's second coming to earth to reign and the glories of His millennial kingdom. Ziba was a simple village lad without any knowledge of the English language, but here he was speaking in perfect English without any ungrammatical expressions or any trace of foreign accent, and what he said was absolutely true to the Scriptures.

So we can see that when the Holy Spirit enables a Christian to speak in tongues it nourishes their spirit with divine truths and builds them up spiritually. It is foolish and wrong to forbid Christians to speak with other tongues, for this is a good and lovely gift of God the Holy Spirit, and God ordained that we should have this gift and use it for our spiritual benefit.

7) Speaking with tongues is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Spirit.

At the outpourings of the Spirit mentioned in Acts 2v4, 10v45,46, 11v17 and 19v6, when the Christians received the baptism of the Spirit, they spoke with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. They received one common evidence that they had been baptised in the Spirit, speaking in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. With the exception of the outpouring at Ephesus, we do not read of any other manifestations of the gifts, and there they prophesied after speaking with tongues.

A. Linford writes on the outpouring of the Spirit at Ephesus on page 55 of his book, "The Baptism in the Holy Spirit." "Again the construction of the Greek (in Acts 19v6) determines the fact that they all spoke in tongues. The expression is 'elaloun te glossais kai epropheteuon.' When 'te' is followed by 'kai' it may be rendered 'both,' or 'not only... but also.' Closest union is expressed by 'te kai.' We could translate thus: 'The Holy Spirit came at once upon them, and they began not only to speak with tongues but also to prophesy.'.... sliding joyously and naturally from inspired language they did not know to inspired language they did know- but speaking by the same Spirit." End of quote.

From humble housewives to mighty apostles the initial evidence of the baptism in the Spirit was speaking with tongues. At the baptism in the Spirit of these believers the Holy Spirit did not give various gifts as the evidence of the baptism in the Spirit He gave the gift of tongues to all. If the Holy Spirit had decreed that the manifestation of any Spiritual gift indicated that a Christian was baptised in the Spirit, then He would certainly have manifested them all on the day of Pentecost, but tongues was the only initial evidence of the Spirit's baptism at Pentecost. When Paul speaks in 1Cor 12v11 of the gifts being given "severally as He will," he is referring to the manifestations of the Spirit in a church meeting or to the other activities of the church. He is not speaking of the baptism in the Spirit, for at Pentecost, the house of Cornelius, and Ephesus, the gift that was given to all was the gift of tongues. In the other two cases in the Acts where it is stated that Christians received the baptism in the Spirit, even non-Pentecostal commentators agree that what Simon saw in Acts 8v18, was the Samaritan Christians speaking in tongues, and we

know that Paul spoke in tongues from 1Cor 14v18, Acts 8v14-20, 9v17.

To those who question that tongues is the initial evidence of the baptism in the Spirit, we would ask, "What other evidence can you supply from the Scriptures that will prove that a person is baptised in the Spirit?" All the other gifts, except the gift of interpretation of tongues, were used by the Old Testament prophets and the disciples of Christ before Pentecost. If a great ministry or many conversions were to be used as a claim for the possession of the baptism of the Spirit, John the Baptist and the apostles could have claimed that they were baptised in the Spirit before Pentecost, however, John 7v39 assures us that this was not so. The Holy Spirit was **WITH** them but not **IN** them with His permanently abiding presence, they had not received the baptism of the Spirit, as the Lord Jesus states in John 14v16,17.

The Holy Spirit has even given revelations to the unconverted, e.g. Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and Cornelius. Cornelius received words of wisdom and knowledge, and a discerning of spirits, before he was converted or baptised in the Spirit. Peter did not say that the household of Cornelius had received the Spirit because they were filled with joy, or were living sanctified lives, desirable as these are; Peter said that they were unmistakably filled with the Spirit because they had spoken in tongues like the 120 on the day of Pentecost. Acts 10v1-6,43-48, 11v17,18. Joy, peace, sanctification, or love for the brethren cannot be looked upon as a claim for being filled with the Spirit; these are a result of abiding in Christ and being led of the Spirit.

The baptism of the Spirit is a conscious experience and should be an overwhelming experience; to be immersed in the mighty power of God the Holy Spirit is just as real an experience and spiritually more uplifting than being baptised in water. The book of Acts shows us that meeting and being baptised with the gracious and mighty Holy Spirit is a great and overwhelming experience. Some Christians think that they have received the baptism of the Spirit when they have received a temporary anointing of the Holy Spirit. However, the Old Testament saints had this experience, and the apostles too, before the baptism of the Holy Spirit was given. Ezek 2v2, 3v24, Judges 14v6, 15v14, Num 11v25, Luke 1v67, 2v27, 2Peter 1v21 with John 7v37-39. The gift of speaking with tongues is the evidence that we have received the New Testament experience of the baptism of the Spirit. Speaking with tongues gives the Christian undeniable and unmistakable evidence that they are filled with the Holy Spirit, and it also enables them to express the "unutterable gushings" of praise, and worship and adoration that fill the soul when a Christian receives the mighty baptism in the Holy Spirit. The other spiritual gifts and graces do not certify that a Christian has received a Pentecostal experience of the baptism in the Spirit, the only certain Scriptural proof of a Pentecostal gift of tongues.

We do not always need a word of wisdom or a gift of healing, or some of the other gifts, however, we always need to build up ourselves in our most holy faith, and this is why after the baptism in the Spirit, God enables us to manifest this gift whenever we desire to do so. The apostolic band did not quibble about the gifts of tongues, or God's choice of it as the initial evidence of the baptism of the Spirit, they accepted it and rejoiced in the use of it, and all Christians should do the same. The only safe pattern of Christian experience is that written in the New Testament, the good and best can lead us far astray, the Word of God alone can lead us safely on.

Some Christians teach that the Christian receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit at conversion; however, this can be shown to be incorrect by many passages of the New Testament Scriptures. The apostles were converted before Pentecost, their names were written in heaven, Luke 10v20; they were "clean," John 15v3; they were Christ's flock and Christ's brethren, Luke 12v32, John 20v17; they belonged to God, John 17v6,9,23, but it was after Calvary that these disciples received the baptism in the Spirit that had been promised to them. Acts.1v5-8. Pentecost was not the time when the apostles were saved, they were rejoicing in their salvation before Pentecost. Luke 24v52,53. They received Christ and believed in His name and so they were saved, John 1v12, even though it was not until the resurrection that they understood the atoning work of the Lord Jesus. Luke 24v44-49.

Paul was saved when he met the Lord Jesus on the Damascus road, he owned the Lordship of Christ, he said, "Lord, what will thou have me to do?" Acts.9v6. Ananias was able to call him "Brother Saul," and he was sent that Paul might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit; this was three days after Paul's conversion. Acts 9v9,17. At Samaria the people accepted Philip's message of salvation and became joyful believers; it was several, or many days later that Peter and John came to Samaria to lay hands on the converts so that they might receive the baptism in the Spirit. Acts 8v5-18.

Even if, as some say, the "disciples" at Ephesus in Acts 19v1-6, were disciples of John Baptist, who became Christians when Paul spoke to them, (a thing that I do not myself believe,) it still follows that they were baptised in the Holy Spirit some time after their conversion. For it would take some time to find a suitable place where they could baptise the disciples, and some time must have elapsed between this and the baptism in the Spirit, even if it were only a matter of minutes or hours. Their baptism in the Spirit occurred, therefore, some time after their conversion, when the apostle Paul laid hands upon them. The apostle Peter tells us in Acts 2v38,39, that as a general rule, the baptism in the Spirit takes place after repentance and faith in Christ. The exceptions to this rule

are found in Acts 10v44-48, and possibly Acts.9v18..

We see in John 1v29,33, that the experience of salvation is looked upon as a quite distinct experience from the baptism of the Holy Spirit, a fact confirmed by Eph 1v13, where it states that "after ye had believed (in Christ,) ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." This promise of the Spirit was not the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, which all Christians enjoy before the baptism in the Spirit as a result of salvation and the new birth; it was the promise of the baptism of the Spirit, the promise of the Father, the endowment of power from on high. Luke 24v49. The baptism in the Spirit can occur a few seconds after conversion, as at the house of Cornelius, or many years after conversion, as was probably the case of the Ephesian believers of Acts 19v1-6. There are thousands, indeed, millions of Christians today who have proved the truth of the Scriptures, that after conversion a Christian can experience the mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit. Paul desired every one of the Corinthians to experience their personal Pentecost and speak with other tongues. 1Cor 14v5. This must have been the will of God or Paul would not have dared to say such a thing. Paul was not content until Christians had received their personal Pentecost and spoken with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. It is very sad that many Christians are as ignorant today of their Pentecostal heritage as the Ephesian believers of Acts 19v1-6, they do not know Christ as the baptiser in the Holy Spirit. John 1v33, Acts 2v32,33. However, those of us who are filled with the Holy Spirit can rejoice in this precious experience and rejoice in the gift of tongues, which is the initial evidence of the baptism in the Spirit.

8) Speaking with tongues can be a powerful sign to people when they understand the language.

Though this is not the normal use of the gift, the gift of tongues is predominantly devotional; it can produce remarkable results when God manifests this gift as a sign as He did on the day of Pentecost. It can convict and convert the sinner, and be a great encouragement to the believer. 1Cor 14v22, Acts 2v4-12, Mark 16v17-20. The gift of tongues is not intended to replace the preaching of the Gospel however, on rare occasions God does use the gift of tongues to confirm the Gospel message by speaking in a language that the listener understands. This sign is intended to prepare the listeners for the preaching of the Gospel. The disciples at Pentecost spoke in tongues that were unknown to them, but many listeners recognised the languages and were captivated and amazed at hearing the rapturous praise of God and His wonderful works in their own language. The listeners at Pentecost knew that these disciples did not know their language, and so when Peter explained what had happened they were instantly willing to accept the Gospel Peter preached. The tongues gained the attention of the people and prepared them for the preaching of Peter. We will now give some well-documented modern instances where the Lord has used the gift of tongues as a sign to convert the unbeliever and encourage the believer.

W.F.P. Burton gives the following testimony: "We used to hold gospel services beside Lytham lifeboat house on Sunday evenings. One Sunday when a big crowd was listening to the preaching, the power of God fell on a Mrs. Whiteside, and she began to speak in a strange language. This dear sister would certainly not mind my stating that under ordinary circumstances she was far from grammatical, even in her own language, and she never learned any other. As she spoke I found that I could understand all that she was saying. A solemn silence fell on the crowd as Mrs. Whiteside spoke in tongues, and I gave the interpretation in English. As soon as we had finished a big, middle-aged man stepped into the ring of listeners and, falling on his knees cried to God to save his soul. He had been a prominent tailor in Lytham, with a big business, but had lost practically everything through his craving for liquor. He was more often inebriated than sober, but he was as sober as a judge and declared that every word of that message in tongues and interpretation went straight to his heart.

Now it happened that a young Japanese man, who was studying shipbuilding in Lytham shipbuilding yard, had stood listening among the crowd outside the lifeboat house. He went home and asked his landlady, 'Who are those people who preach and sing on Lytham beach?' She replied, 'They are a lot of fanatical, religious enthusiasts. Some say that they are religion mad,' he remarked, 'but I heard a most remarkable thing. One spoke in perfect Japanese, while another gave the exact equivalent in English.'

There one had both the tongue and the interpretation corroborated, while the result, in a soul won for the Lord Jesus, was ample evidence that the thing was from God." End of quote.

Another account of this same incident is given in Mr. Burton's book "Signs following," on pages 28 and 29: The writer recommends all readers of this book to obtain this excellent booklet. This booklet gives the additional information that Mrs. Whitehouse spoke in tongues about the death of Christ on the Cross for us. Mr. Burton goes on to tell on page 29 and 30 of his book, of a highly respected Methodist minister who heard Pentecostal Christians speaking in praise and adoration to God in seven languages which he knew, they were speaking about the death, resurrection and second coming of Christ, and extolling Christ's blood and His risen power. This so moved the minister that on his way home on the train he longed for the same experience, he through his pipe and tobacco out of the train window, he earnestly sought and received the baptism in the Spirit with speaking with tongues before the train reached his station. There are other instances, which could be quoted to show the use of the gift of tongues as a sign, those who would like to read of a few more can read my book "The Comforter has come."

We can clearly see that there are many reasons why every Christian should desire to speak with other tongues as the Holy Spirit gives them utterance, the gift of tongues is one of God's good, valuable and perfect gifts. God has given the gift of tongues to His Church because He considers it to be absolutely indispensable and necessary for the spiritual welfare of His Church. God does not give any gifts that are mean or paltry, they are all priceless, magnificent, good, beautiful and precious, and we should bow the knee at His wisdom, love and authority. Who are we to criticise the "good and perfect" gifts that our heavenly Father has given to us? He is the Lord, let us recognise the value and importance of what He has given. How dare we criticise His gifts, or neglect to seek them, when He has commanded us not only to pursue after love, but earnestly seek spiritual gifts as well? 1Cor 14v1. The gift of tongues is one of His gifts, let us recognise its value and use.

The Interpretation Of Tongues.

This is the last gift spoken of in 1Cor 12v8-10, 1Cor 14v5,13,27,28. This is the supernatural ability given by the Holy Spirit to interpret an utterance of speaking with tongues, the person who receives the interpretation having no knowledge of the language spoken. The interpretation of tongues can take the form of a prayer for heavenly help, a prayer of dedication, a statement of faith and assurance, an expression of praise and worship, as well as words of exhortation, edification and comfort. The interpretation can be addressed to God as well as to man, and sometimes the interpretation can be the answer to the prayer, or statement of faith, etc., that has been spoken out in tongues, and on these occasions it would be more accurate to call it a prophecy more than an interpretation. However, we do not have to be too technical in our definition, the Holy Spirit will interpret the tongue as He thinks best.

The late C.L. Parker makes the following helpful comment on the gift of interpretation of tongues on pages 19 and 20 of his book "Covert Earnestly."

"The Greek word 'interpretation' does not primarily mean 'translation.'" It is used for example in Luke 14v27. of our Lord 'expounding' the Old Testament Scriptures, and it is normally translated, 'expound,' 'give the meaning of.' The interpretation may then be longer or shorter than the tongue of which it may give a longer or shorter exposition. The interpreter may receive his gift before, during, or after, the tongue: he may launch out upon a single sentence, and receive the rest thought by thought as he is speaking. In any case he recognises the reception of the gift, whenever and however it is given, by the unction, which is coming upon him: and this unction abides upon those listeners who are filled with the Spirit. As Peter says, 2Peter 1v21, 'Holy men of God spake as they were carried along by the Spirit.' There is no effort in such speaking: no searching for words, no wondering what to say next. As long as the unction is upon you, you speak with ease and delight. When it lifts you have no more to say and come to a stop. This is a beautiful gift since it brings two members of an Assembly into a combined ministry of love and edification for the rest of the Church.

One member may not have the faith to speak in his own language words which can be understood, and yet be perfectly free to speak in a tongue words of which he does not know the meaning. For as soon as one utters words which one understands, one is responsible for what one says: but when one speaks in a tongue the responsibility for the meaning of the words rest upon the interpreter, and it is indeed a very responsible thing to utter words which purport to come from the Almighty." End of quote.

The person who speaks in tongues should pray that they might receive the gift of interpretation, they should not be content to see the other interpret all the time. 1Cor 14v13,14. However, Paul tells us that only one person should interpret even if several have the interpretation. 1Cor 14v27,28.

Sometimes there is quite a difference between the length of a tongue and its interpretation, the interpretation can be much shorter or much longer than the tongue, this can be explained by the following facts.

1) Because of the difference in human personality.

Some Christians interpret with many words some with few words, because of their difference in temperament and vocabulary; some Christians are wordy, whereas others are brief and precise in what they say. The Holy Spirit uses Christian's distinctive characteristics to convey the interpretation, and so a Christian's disposition, vocabulary, and spirituality will effect their interpretation or prophecy. This can be confirmed by comparing the prophecies of the Old Testament. e.g. Isaiah and Amos.

2) Because of the difference in the Holy Spirit's method of communication.

As we have seen the Holy Spirit expounds the interpretation as it pleases Him. The Holy Spirit can give the same interpretation to different Christians in different ways. One may have a pictorial vision and describe what they see in simple words, another may have words spoken to them in their spirit, while another may understand the tongue as it is spoken. The interpretation is communicated in different ways but the theme is the same. God will very often

give picture visions to those Christians who are not wordy or verbose, and this is probably the best form of interpretation because it is so striking and so easily remembered. When some mature Christians interpret their "inspired oratory" is profoundly moving, and at large public meetings these Christians are the ones who interpret.

A) Linford tells us on page 15 of his excellent book, "Spiritual Gifts."

"One who recognised a tongue interpreted by Mrs. Crisp, an early Pentecostal leader, stated that the full sense of the message was given, but the style was loftier and the language more beautiful than a literal translation of the language would have been." End of quote.

Those, who like Mrs. Crisp, have a real ministry of this gift, 1Cor 14v28, should be left to interpret in large public meetings, and those whose gift of interpretation is more immature, should humbly and graciously sit back and listen, they can manifest their gift in the smaller church or house-meeting.

3) Because sometimes a Christian may not give the full interpretation.

A Christian may only give part of the interpretation, because God only wanted them to listen to and conform the interpretation, not give it, or they could have been distracted by something and so lose touch with God. Sometimes a Christian will carry on far longer than they should do when they are speaking in a tongue for interpretation, and because they are blessed carry on praising God in tongues even though their message has finished.

4) Because the "interpretation" may really be a prophecy or contain a prophecy in addition to the interpretation.

Sometimes a Christian may feel so moved and blessed by an outstanding sermon or an anointed singing item, that they feel that this is an indication for them to speak in tongues for interpretation. However a surge of emotion or a genuine blessing of the Holy Spirit does not mean that we should always speak out a tongue for interpretation, it may be a blessing to uplift us, or to help us to pray, or praise, and worship God. On these occasions a burst of praise may be interpreted as praise, or the Holy Spirit may give a prophecy in answer to this praise. On other occasions the Holy Spirit may interpret a tongue and give a prophecy in addition to the tongue, and so the "interpretation" will be considerably longer than the tongue.

5) Because sometimes, unfortunately, a Christian may invent an interpretation.

Sometimes through ignorance, wrong teaching, or wilful determination to give an interpretation when you do not possess it, a false interpretation can be given. We cannot interpret tongues at will, the Holy Spirit will not give an interpretation to the regular interpreters in order to start someone else interpreting. Spiritual Christians easily discern extempore preaching paraded as interpretation from true interpretation; true interpretation carries the power and blessing of God and greatly edifies and blesses the church. It is a gift greatly to be desired.

Historical Accounts In Scripture Are Valuable For Formulating Doctrine.

Some anti-Pentecostal Christians have tried to say that 1Cor 12v13. is the only Scripture that we can use for doctrinal purposes in deciding whether believers receive the baptism in the Spirit at conversion, They say that the historical accounts in the book of Acts, cannot be used as a basis of doctrine, as historical accounts are unreliable for formulating doctrine. That this is completely wrong is seen from the following facts.

a) The historical parts of the Scriptures show the out-workings of the doctrinal truths that God has given.

The historical parts of Scripture are the proof and actual demonstration of Scriptural truth. They reveal God's desires by His acts. Christ's acts and life revealed God's purposes for men far better than any doctrinal statement could have done on its own. Are we to lay Christ's actions on one side as having no doctrinal importance? All true Christians will deny such a dangerous and pernicious theory. Paul in 1Cor 10v1-15. tells us that God has instructed His people through history, and taught vital doctrines by this means. It is only the historical passages that give us the right interpretation of Scriptural truth in some cases. Indeed, such things as demon activity would hardly be dealt with in the Scriptures without the record of their activity and exorcism. It is the historical passages that show us how to deal with demon-possessed people. Christianity is built upon example as well as precept, the best way to demonstrate doctrine is by example and practice. Christ taught His apostles spiritual things by His example and performed the miraculous.

It is dishonest exposition to say that 1Cor 12v13, is the only means of finding the Christian norm in relation to conversion and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The trouble is that these expositors find the accounts in Acts far too plain in their theology, and they desire a Scripture that is ambiguous enough for them to manipulate to justify their own lack of Pentecostal experience. If a person said that you cannot get doctrine for preaching or living from the

historical portions of Scripture, they would be looked upon as demented and unbalanced. Christ gave His disciples the doctrine on the baptism of the baptism in the Spirit before the day of Pentecost, in the accounts in Acts we see the out-workings of that doctrine, and the manifestations that one can expect when a Christian is baptised in the Holy Spirit.

b) It is a fact that the epistles are mostly dealing with the actual conditions in churches, as so they are as much historical as the book of Acts. They are mainly dealing with practical problems in the churches, and not just with theoretical problems. Indeed, the first epistle to the Corinthians is almost completely given over to Paul's answers to the problems of the Corinthians. Are we to reject the teaching in the epistles that is historical? Of course not! Paul tells us in 2Tim 3v16., that all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, and that includes the historical portions.

c) In the New Testament receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit was not just a theory or an intellectual test.

The baptism in the Spirit was a living vital experience, everybody knew when he or she had received this experience because it was an overwhelming supernatural experience, and the Holy Spirit enabled all those who He had filled, to pray and praise on the highest possible level, by giving him or her the gift of tongues. God shows His will for us by the experience of Christians in the Bible, and shows us the way to experience God's will for us. So we can see that we cannot dispense with the historical portions of the book of Acts, when formulating doctrine on the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist promised that Christ would be the baptiser in the Holy Spirit. Matt 3v11, Mark 1v8, Luke 3v16, John 1v33. Every Christian needs to be baptised in the Holy Spirit by Christ their Saviour. The risen Christ called this baptism "the promise of the Father," Luke 24v49, Acts 1v4, and instructed His disciples to tarry until they received it, promising that they would only have to wait a few days to receive the mighty baptism in the Spirit. Acts 1v5. We read that this baptism was promised to every Christian, Acts 2v38,39, and the Samaritans, Paul, Cornelius and his friends, and the Ephesians, are directly stated to have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Acts 8v14-17, 9v17,18, 10v44-48, 11v1-18, 19v1-6.

The Holy Spirit is said to have "baptised" people seven times in the New Testament; two in Acts, once in the epistles, and four times in the Gospels out of the mouth of John Baptist. Acts 1v5, 11v16, 1Cor 12v13, Matt 3v11, Mark 1v8, Luke 3v16, John 1v33. However, the synonymous phrases "filled with the Holy Spirit," Acts 2v4; "the gift of the Holy Spirit," Acts 2v38, 10v45; "received the Holy Spirit," Acts 10v47, 19v2, 1Cor 2v12, Gal 3v2, (Possibly Rom 8v14-16); "the promise of the Spirit," Gal 3v14; "the promise of the Father," Luke 24v49, Acts 1v4; and the seal of the Spirit, Eph 1v13, 4v30; are also used to speak of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

All the above Scriptures show the great value of the historical accounts of Scripture, in explaining and formulating doctrine about the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

We prove that 1Cor 12v13 does not teach that Christians are baptised in the Holy Spirit when they are saved.

We declare that the following facts prove this to be true.

a) Some scholars state that in 1Cor 12v13, "baptised," refers to water baptism and not to the baptism in the Spirit.

Olaf M. Norlie in his "Simplified New Testament" translates in 1Cor 12v13 in the following way, "And by one Spirit we have through baptism been made members of one body- Jews and Greeks alike, slave and free,- and all have been given to drink at one Source, and the one Spirit."

A. Linford writes that in 1Cor 12v13, "baptised," speaks of water baptism, not the baptism in the Spirit.

"That there are here two separate historic experiences is shown by the fact that both words are in the aorist tense, the tense that speaks of events as completed in time, incidents that are rounded off and complete. It is the historic tense. The connective ("kai,") and makes it quite clear that the events are regarded as distinct and consecutive." End of quote.

The words "baptised into one body" speak of water baptism, the Holy Spirit being the agent of regeneration, the baptism in water being the outward sign, the words "made to drink into one Spirit" speaks of the baptism in the Spirit. The Greek word for "drink" is "potizo" which Vincent says means, "originally to give to drink, from which comes the sense of to water, to irrigate"

Arndt and Gingrich say that when used of plants "potizo" is used in the sense of irrigate much more often than it is used to speak of "water," plants, field, garden, etc. 1Cor.3v6. It gives the thought of saturation, as in the picture of Isaiah 44v3, "For I will pour water on Him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." The Spirit-flooded life, is the Spirit baptised life. The word "potizo" here, can really only speak of the time when the Corinthians were baptised in the Holy Spirit. So in 1Cor 12v13 we read of two experiences, baptism in water and the baptism in the

Spirit.

b) In the second part of 1Cor 12v13, "made to drink one Spirit," Paul is teaching, not that all Christians have received the baptism of the Spirit at conversion, but that all Christians who are baptised in the Spirit are filled with the same Holy Spirit. The main emphasis is upon the recurrent word "one," "one body," "one Spirit." In the King James Version, "one" occurs seven times in 1Cor 12v11-13, the "one" body of Christ has "one" Spirit as the source of its manifestations.

c) The context of 1Cor 12v13 is not showing how people become Christians.

The apostle Paul is discussing the relation of the unity of the body of Christ, to the manifestation of spiritual gifts. Paul is not discussing how they became Christians; he is reminding the Corinthians that they are all members of the one and only body of Christ, and that they are all filled with the one and only Holy Spirit.

d) The all's of 1Cor 12v13, were true of the Corinthian Christians of Paul's day, but are not true of all Christians today.

With many present day Christians, neither the first "all" referring to water baptism, nor the second "all" referring to the baptism in the Spirit, are true. In the Corinthian Church all Christians were baptised after they had believed by immersion, this is certainly not true of many Christians today, in some churches none are baptised in the New Testament way. In the Corinthian church, and any church that Paul founded, Paul led those who had been baptised in Water in to the baptism of the Spirit, from Acts 19v1-6 we can see that Paul looked upon baptism in water as the introductory step to the baptism in the Spirit, and he immediately remedied any deficiency in connection with baptism in water, or the baptism in the Spirit. If the churches today followed Paul's example in connection with water baptism and the baptism in the Spirit, then could then apply these "all's" of 1Cor 12v13 to their present day churches, however, many oppose believers baptism in water by immersion, and they forbid to speak with tongues and despise spiritual gifts, instead of earnestly desiring spiritual gifts. How can Christians devoid of spiritual gifts claim this Scripture, that is speaking of a water baptised and Spirit filled church? This dishonest interpretation is the result of people trying to make the Scriptures conform to their experience, instead of making their experience conform to the Scripture. The sad thing is that they rob other Christians of vital New Testament experiences by their unbelieving exposition and example. Luke 11v52.

Some will still insist that the first part of this verse in 1Cor 12v13 is speaking of the baptism in the Spirit, they say that the Greek word "eis," translated in the King James Version as "into," shows that all Christians are baptised in the Holy Spirit at conversion. Paul is stating that even in the Corinthian church, baptism in water and baptism in the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues, was the norm. Those who resist this pattern are more rebellious than the rebellious Corinthians. There is nothing sacrosanct about the translation of the Greek "eis," it can be translated as "for," "unto," "in relation to," "towards," as well as "in" or "Into." e.g. "for the remission of sins." Matt 3v11, Mark 1v4, Luke 3v3, Acts 2v38, 19v3-5. In the A.V. "eis" is translated in over 10 different ways. Olaf M. Norlie gives a good interpretation of this verse in his translation, "And by one Spirit we have through baptism been made members of one Body- Jews and Greeks alike, slave and free,- and all have been given to drink at one Source, and the one Spirit."

The Greek Words Used To Describe The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit.

A) Spirituals. "Pneumatikon." In 1Cor 12v1 and 14v1, "pneumatikon," is translated as "spiritual gifts," in the King James Version. Paul informs us that Christians should not be ignorant about spiritual gifts; and in 1Cor 14v1 he tells us to eagerly seek spiritual gifts as well as pursue after love. A truly spiritual ("pneumatikos") Christian manifests both gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit. 1Cor 2v13,15, 3v1, Gal 5v22. Spiritual gifts are part of our spiritual blessings in Christ. 1Cor 12v7, 14v37, Eph 1v3, 1Peter 2v5, Eph 5v19, Col 3v16.

B) Grace gifts. "Charismata." Spiritual gifts have an important place with God's other "charismata:" God's gracious eternal purposes and callings, Rom 11v29; God's gift of salvation and eternal life, Rom 5v15,16 and 6v23; and the various kinds of ministries God gives to the members of His Church. Rom 12v6. Paul states that self-control can be a grace gift of God, as well as a fruit of the Spirit. 1Cor 7v7, Gal 5v22,23. Paul uses "charismata" to definitely speak of spiritual gifts in Rom 12v6, 1Cor 1v7, 12v4,9,28,30,31, and Rom 1v11, where "charisma" and "pneumatikos" occur together. See 1Tim 4v14 and 2Tim 1v6, where a ministry gift or spiritual gift was imparted to Timothy by prayer. Paul was delivered from death by a divine grace gift ("charisma") by the prayers of Christians. 2Cor 1v10,11. Spiritual gifts cover one aspect of God's great gifts of grace, and make us the stewards and channels of God's grace to a needy Church and world. 1Peter 4v10.

C) Distributions.

1) "Diaireseis." In 1Cor 12v4-7, Paul states, v4. "Now there are distinctive varieties and distributions of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit. v5. And there are distinctive varieties and distributions of ministries, but the same Lord.

v6. And there are distinctive varieties and distributions of operations ("energematōn," the effect of a thing wrought, from "energeo," to operate, perform, energise), but it is the same God who energises and inspires them all in all. v7. But to each one there is constantly being given the clearly seen operations of the Spirit for the profit of all." In all three cases, "distinctive varieties and distributions" is the noun "diareseis," from "dia," "apart," and "haireō," "to take;" and is akin to the verb "diaireō," "to take asunder," "to divide into parts, to distribute." The God, who upholds and energises the Universe, divides and energises His Church with various aspects of His abilities, as we need them.

In 1Cor 12v11, Paul writes, "All these gifts are inspired and energised by the one and same Holy Spirit, who distributes to each person individually and separately as He wills." "Distributes," is "dairōn," the present active of "diaireō," the present tense shows the active and continual distribution and dividing of His spiritual gifts among Christ's Church by the Holy Spirit. "As He wills," is "kathos bouletai;" "bouletai," is the present indicative middle of "boulomai," "to will, to determine;" the present tense again shows the repeated and continual action of the Holy Spirit's giving. He comes to bind the body of Christ together in love by the distribution of His gifts, so that each member feels the need of each other's gifts and ministries. 1Cor 12v11-27.

2) "Merismois." In the King James Version "merismois" is translated as "gifts" in Heb 2v4, it speaks of "a sharing out, a dividing, a distribution." The Holy Spirit shares out some of His abilities to the Church. "Merismos" only occurs in the New Testament in Heb 2v4 and Heb 4v12, where we read of the ability of the Word of God to divide and discern our innermost thoughts, motives and intents, and to divide between soul and spirit. The Holy Spirit's gifts enabled the early Church to serve God effectively; boldness in preaching came as a result of the Holy Spirit's mighty workings and miracles. Acts 4v30,31.

D) Ministrations. "Diakonion." 1Cor 12v5. "Diakonion," is derived from "diakonos," and has the general meaning of service. It is used of Paul's description of his apostolic office and of the other ministries of the Church. Acts 6v4, 12v25, 20v24, 21v19, Rom 11v15, 12v7, 4v1, 5v18, 6v3, Eph 4v12, Col 4v17, 1Tim 1v12, 2Tim 4v5,11. In Rom 16v15 it is used of the household of Stephanas addicting themselves to the service of the saints. It is used for the ministration to the poor. Acts 6v1, 11v29, 1Cor 16v15, 2Cor 8v4, 9v1. In Luke 10v40 both the noun "diakonia," "serving," and the verb "diakoneō," "to serve," are used of Martha's loving service and thoughtful meal preparation for Christ and His apostles. The Holy Spirit's ministrations are even more practical, loving and thoughtful than Martha's thoughtful and caring ministrations.

E) Manifestation. "Phanerosis." "Phanerosis," is derived from "phaneroō," "to make manifest," it only occurs in 1Cor 12v7 and 2Cor 4v2; it means, "a manifestation, a making known, a shining forth." Paul says that Christians should manifest the love and power of the invisible God by spiritual gifts as well as manifest the truth by diligent preaching, witnessing, and holy living. 1Cor 12v7, 2Cor 4v1-7. Spiritual gifts are the active manifestations and acts of Almighty God in His Church. Our gracious Almighty Lord has come to manifest Himself in His Church through His spiritual gifts; He has not come to be an idle bystander, while we manifest our limited human abilities.

F) Demonstrations. "Apodixis." "Apodixis," only occurs in 1Cor 2v4 in the New Testament, and speaks of a manifestation, demonstration and proof. Paul's intellectual appeal at Athens bore little fruit, so when he went from Athens to Corinth he knew that the gross evil of Corinth demanded more than human oratory and non-miraculous evangelical preaching and reasoning, so he determined to preach Christ and Him crucified, and rely on God demonstrating the truth of the Gospel by the miraculous. Paul compelled the Gentiles to believe in Christ and obey the Gospel through mighty signs, wonders and miracles. Acts 17v15 to 19v12, 1Cor 2v2-4, Rom 15v18-20. Christ and Paul needed the full equipment and demonstrations of the Holy Spirit, and so do we. Let us pray for apostolic labourers to be sent to reap God's harvest. Matt 9v38.

G) Operations. "Energematōn." The singular "energema," speaks of, "that which is wrought through energy, the effect produced, operation;" from "energeo," "to work in, to be active, to perform, to energise and operate." "Energematōn" occurs in 1Cor 12v6, where it speaks of the varieties of operation of ALL the gifts. In 1Cor 12v10, "energematata" is used with "dunamion," to speak of ONE of the power gifts, the "workings of miracles." Because the working of miracles deals with the operations of God's power on nature and man's environment; it has a powerful and lasting effect on people and nations. This is clearly demonstrated by the effect of the plagues on Egypt and the opening of the Red Sea. Many generations later ungodly nations were still trembling at the memory of them. Joshua 2v9-11, 1Sam 4v6-8, Isaiah 26v9. Our Lord's nature miracles also had a profound effect on those who saw them. Christians should be energised by God and manifest spiritual gifts.

H) Works. "Erga." This is used in the New Testament to speak of the deeds of men, both good and evil; but it is used by Jesus in John's Gospel, to speak of God's miraculous works. John 3v19-21, 4v34, 5v20,36, 6v28,29, 9v3,4, 10v25,32,33,37,38, 14v10-12, 15v24, 17v4, Acts 13v41, 1Cor 3v13-15, Rev 2v2, 20v10, etc.. God's normal works are mighty miracles. We should not limit the mighty workings of the Holy One of Israel by our small expectations and abilities; this was Israel's sin, and it is a major sin of the Church today. Psalm 78v41, Eph 3v19-21.

I) Signs. "Seemia." In the New Testament, "seemion" speaks of a sign, mark, token, wonder and miracle. Spiritual gifts are a sign from God and a signpost to God. God desires to show the world that He is a living God, and to answer Satan's lying signs and wonders. 2Thess 2v9, Matt 24v24, 2Tim 3v8, Rev 16v13,14, etc. Jesus refused to grant the personal signs of His enemies, but He asked the people to accept the miracles and healings that He did as a sign and proof of the Divine source of His ministry and authority, and He promised the people more signs to help them believe. John 5v20,35-37, 10v37,38, Matt 11v20-30. In Matt 12v38-45, Jesus did not condemn miraculous signs; He condemned the people who had such evil hearts of unbelief, that they would not believe after seeing a multitude of signs, wonders and miracles through His ministry. Jesus warned that unbelief and hatred of the truth in the light of mighty signs and wonders can be a final act of spiritual suicide, and is the unforgiveable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. John 15v21-25, Matt 12v22-32, Mark 3v20-35.

Signs, wonders and miracles are a vital part of the armoury of the Church of Christ. Mark 16v17,20, Luke 9v1,2, 10v1-9, Acts 5v12-16, 8v5-8, Rom 15v18-21, 1Cor 2v4,5, 14v25, 2Cor 12v12. The early Church did not depend upon oratory, but upon the truth confirmed by the signs and wonders of God. Luke 9v1,2, 10v1-9, Mark 16v17,20, Acts 4v16, 5v12, 6v8, 8v5-8, 2Cor 12v12, Rom 15v18-21, 1Cor 14v25. Paul told each local Church to covet earnestly the gifts of the Holy Spirit. 1Cor 1v7, 12v7,31, 14v1,5,18,39. The command to desire spiritual gifts is as binding as the command to follow after love. 1Cor.14v1. Spiritual gifts and their accompanying signs and wonders are promised to the Church until God's kingdom comes upon earth at Christ's second coming. Acts 2v17-21,38,39, John 14v12-14, Rev 11v1-15.

J) Miracles. "Dunameis." The singular "dunamis" speaks of ability, power, strength, it is used of works of a supernatural character and origin, which could not occur, or be produced by natural laws or natural agents. In the King James Version it is translated as "power" seventy seven times; "mighty work" eleven times; "miracle" eight times; "strength" seven times; "might" four times; "virtue" three times; "mighty deed" once; "ability" once; "wonderful works," once; etc.. Every gift of the Holy Spirit is miraculous, however, in the Bible the word "miracle" usually refers to the operation of the gifts of power and demonstration. When God's power operates it produces miracles.

K) Wonders. "Teras." "Teras," occurs 16 times in the New Testament, and is always associated with either "signs," "seemia;" or "miracles," "dunameis." It is used to speak of God's wonders twelve times, Acts 2v19,22,43, 4v30, 5v12, 6v8, 7v36, 14v3, 15v12, Rom 15v19, 2Cor 12v12, Heb.2v4; of Satan's lying wonders three times, Matt 24v24, Mark 13v22, 2Thes 2v9, and on another occasion, in Jn.4v48., Christ states that signs and wonders establish faith in otherwise faithless people. See John 5v19,20. Satan is doing many "lying wonders" through false cults, the Church has the complete answer to these "lying wonders," if it will seek and manifest God's spiritual gifts. Satan and the powers of darkness fear the Holy Spirit's gifts, and try to stop Christians from seeking them; or try to make Christians fanatical and proud when they manifest them, even as Satan tried with the Lord Jesus. Matt 4v1-11. It is vitally important to remember that Christ has guaranteed that as God's children, we cannot receive anything evil when we are worshipping God, or seeking God, for His gracious gifts. Matt 7v7-11, Luke 11v9-13, 1John 5v18. God has not left the field of the miraculous to Satan; we can still have the gracious gifts of Divine illumination and guidance, and Divine inspiration and power. God still does wonders, He is not "The Great I Was," He is "The Great I Am," The Great Yahweh, who changes not; He still manifests wonders, marvels, portents, and prodigies through His spiritual gifts.

Wonderful things. "Thaumasios." In Matt 21v15, the neuter plural of the adjective "thaumasios," "wonderful," is used as a noun, to speak of the "wonders," or "wonderful things," that Jesus did in healing the blind and lame in the Temple; which really incensed the Holy-Spirit-resisting chief priests and scribes.

L. "The works of power of the age to come." Heb 6v5. In Heb 6v5, Paul tells us that spiritual gifts are a partial manifestation of the powers of the coming age, "dunameis te mellontos aionos." In 1Cor 13v8-13, Paul is certainly not saying that spiritual gifts would cease with the apostles, or with the completion of the Scripture canon; for Paul tells us, in this same Scripture, that spiritual gifts will continue until "that which is perfect is come;" that is, until Jesus returns, and God sets up His kingdom on earth. To say, as some do, that, "that which is perfect" is the canon of Scripture, does violence to the context, for "shall fully know," "epignosomai," the future middle indicative of "epiginosko," speaks of the time in the future when we have a full and "face to face," ("prosopon pros prosopon") perfect knowledge of God. This future "face to face," "full knowledge;" can only occur at the "perfect day," when God's kingdom of love comes to earth at Christ's return. Prov 4v18.

Ellicott says of 1Cor 13v10, "This verse shows by the emphatic 'then,' that the time when the gifts shall cease is the end of this dispensation. The imperfect shall not cease until the perfect is brought in." End of quote.

Paul states that spiritual gifts only cease in the sense that the partial use of heavenly powers is replaced by a perfect use of those powers. The partial use of "the powers of the age to come," will continue until they are

exchanged for the full, complete and perfect use of those powers in God's kingdom. The occasional manifestations of the power gifts will be replaced by the permanent, continual and complete manifestations of those powers. The permanent possession of what we now call supernatural powers will be a fact. The supernatural transport of Elijah and Philip is a rare and exceptional thing in the Scriptures, but it is the everyday norm in the kingdom of God. 1Kings 18v12, 2Kings 2v11, Acts 8v39,40. The partial words of wisdom and knowledge, and discernings of spirits, will be replaced by the continual and perfect revelation of the wisdom and knowledge that comes from the face-to-face vision of the person of God. The ability to know and worship in all the tongues of angels and men will supersede the ability to speak in and interpret unknown tongues. The partial revelations of a prophetic gift and ministry will disappear in the fullness and perfect revelation of face-to-face communion with God.

In "A Bible Commentary For Today," edited by Howley, Bruce and Ellison, Paul Marsh makes the following comment on "when the perfect comes," in 1Cor 13v10, he says it: - "Anticipates the Parousia, the culmination of this age. To suggest that the perfect refers to the completion of the canon of Scripture fails to find any support in the biblical usage of 'perfect,' or any of its cognate forms. Such an interpretation exists only by the virtue of the need to explain the absence of certain 'charismata' in many churches today.---At His coming we shall see and know with an immediacy as yet unknown, 'face to face.'" End of quote.

Paul said that his 23 years of mature Christian experience and knowledge was like babyhood compared with the experience and knowledge of God's kingdom, when our hazy image of God will be replaced by the glorious experience of a face-to-face vision of God. 1Cor 13v10-12. Until that wonderful day comes, God has promised to give us the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The effect of the gifts of the Spirit in the Scriptures was wonder, fear, amazement and astonishment, Mark 1v27, 10v24,32, 9v6. "thambeomai;" Luke 4v36, 5v9, Acts 3v10. "thambos;" Matt 12v23, Mark 2v12, 5v42, 6v51, Acts 2v7,12, 8v9,11,13, 10v45, 12v16. "existemi;" Mark 9v6. "ekphobos;" Luke 5v9. "perieko;" Mark 5v42, 16v8, Luke 5v26, Acts 3v10, 10v10, 11v5, 22v17. "ekstasis;" Mark 7v37, Luke 9v43. "ekplesso;" Luke 2v9, 5v26, 7v16, etc. "phobos;" Matt 9v8,33, Mark 12v17. etc. "thaumazo;" Mark 13v17. God compelled people to listen by mighty signs, wonders and miracles. God still desires to make people wonder and be amazed by the things that He is doing, the purpose being to make them listen to, and receive the Gospel message.

Conclusion.

I will now close this study on the gifts of the Spirit with the following facts and observations. The apostle Paul led Christians into a Pentecostal experience right throughout his ministry, in all the churches he founded. In 1Cor 12-14. we read that Paul is giving instructions regarding spiritual gifts and telling the Christians at Corinth to earnestly seek them, about 26 years after the outpouring on the day of Pentecost. Just before Paul died he was exhorting Timothy not to neglect or despise the revelations that had been given through spiritual gifts, and the ministry of spiritual gifts, this was about 33 years after Pentecost. 1Tim 1v18, 2Tim 1v6-8.

John was still experiencing spiritual gifts about 63 years after Pentecost, indeed, he was then enjoying the greatest manifestation of spiritual gifts that he had known in his life. Through the apostle John the Lord Jesus was exhorting the Christian church to take heed to the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit and His gifts. Rev 2v7,11,17. etc. We cannot do better than to follow the example of these great men of God in relation to spiritual gifts, and we should "covert earnestly" the lovely gifts of the Holy Spirit. 1Cor 14v1.

As Pentecostals we do not over-emphasise the gift of tongues and the other gifts of the Holy Spirit, we just give them the place that the New Testament tells us to, we recognise the place that the Holy Spirit and His gifts are given in the Scriptures. It is the critics that say, and quite wrongly, that this is our only theme. Pentecostals fervently believe in the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures, and affirm that these Scriptures teach the virgin birth, true deity, compassionate humanity, redeeming and atoning blood, and glorious second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, every doctrine that the Scripture and the evangelical Christian holds as "fundamental" and "precious" is held by Pentecostal Christians. Pentecostal Christians claim that the Scripture also teaches the Pentecostal experience is for today, and that the evidence for this is absolutely unassailable. Pentecostal Christians also believe that a true fullness of the Holy Spirit will cause the Christian to flee evil things and "follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." 1Tim 6v11. May "great grace" as well as "great power" rest upon every reader of this book, I pray that every reader may come to experience their Pentecostal Heritage. Acts 4v33,34. Seek to meet with Christ the baptiser in the Holy Spirit and fire, and take the precious and mighty gifts He offers. Matt 3v11, Mark 1v7,8.

Appendix VII : The Use Of The Gift Of Tongues During The Last Seven Years Of This Age, Especially During The Great Tribulation

- 1)** Praying in tongues brings the authority into a Christians experience where they can speak to a mountain for it to be removed into the sea. Matt 17v20, Jude v20,21.
- 2)** It will bring the Christian to a level of faith where they "have the faith of God." (YLT) Mark 11v22.
- 3)** It will enable the Christian to fulfil Our Lord's wonderful promise in John 14v12-14 to do not only the same works, but greater: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." Rev 11v3-6.
- 4)** It will bring a Christian to a level of faith to operate a last day Elijah ministry, like the Two Witnesses will operate. Mal 4v5,6, Matt 17v10,11, Rev 11v3-6.
- 5)** It will also allow abundant manifestation of the revelation gifts, especially the word of knowledge and the word of wisdom, so that, like the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry, the hearts, characters and lives of all who come before them for prayer will be made manifest to them. John 2v24,25.
- 6)** Continual and diligent use of the gift of tongues will get the Christian into the heavenly places and keep them there. Heb chapter 3 & 4.
- 7)** It will enable the small groups of praying Christians (the glorious woman, Rev 12v1) when gathered together to bring judgement and discipline upon the wicked and powers of darkness, even as the Two Witnesses will be doing. Matt 18v19,20, Rev 11v3-6.
- 8)** It will bring a bubble of invincible power and protection around and over the small groups of praying Christians, and will give complete protection from any kind of attack: nerve gas, conventional bombs, hydrogen missiles. Not a hair on their hair will be damaged in any way, even as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were protected in the fiery furnace. Dan 3v27.
- 9)** It will also bring a great increase in angelic ministrations to these praying Christians, with open visions of them when they'll come and speak directly to believers. Gen 28v10-22, John 1v51, Heb 1v14, Rev 12v6.
- 10)** Once the 3rd Seal is opened (Rev 6v5,6) and food is scarce and a great price, praying Christians will have production and multiplication of foods and drinks, even as the Lord Jesus had during His earthly ministry and Israel experienced in the wilderness with Moses. This will also be preparing them for the great dearth of food during the Great Tribulation. Neh 9v20,21, John 6v1-14, Rev 12v6,14.
- 11)** The Great Tribulation will produce a great need in Christians to seek Him in a way like never before (using the gift of tongues), due to the exceptionally evil and hard times, thus producing a Glorious Church at His Second Coming. Dan 11v32-35, 12v10, Matt 24v21, John 17v17-19, 2Thess 2v3, 1Tim 4v1-3, 2Tim 3v1-9, Rev 7v9,10,14, 12v4,5, 13v10, 14v12, 16v15, 19v7-9, 20v4.
- 12)** Many of the Christians who rule with Christ during the Millennium will have been saved and kept during the Great Tribulation by God through His great grace and power by their diligent use of the gift of tongues. Rev 14v1-5, 20v4.
- 13)** Through praying in tongues Christians will be able to deal with the giants and the fierce pre-historic dinosaurs and creatures that Satan and his evil angels will create during the Great Tribulation. Gen 6v1-8, 1Sam 17v1-52 (esp. v45), 2Kings 6v8-23 (esp. v 17), Dan 2v43, 12v1, Mark 13v19, Luke 17v26,27, 2Thess 2v7, Rev 6v7,8 ("with the beasts," Greek, "theerioon," (Strong's NT:2342), a wild ferocious beast).
- 14)** The conditions upon earth during the 3rd Seal will be a real prompter to Christians to seek the Lord Jesus in a new way using the gift of tongues, and so be prepared for the Great Tribulation (the opening of the 4th Seal). Psalm 24v3-6, Rev 6v5,6,7,8.
- 15)** Praying in tongues will raise up ministries for the last days, especially the last day Elijah ministry. Mal 4v5,6, 1Cor 12v28, Eph 4v7-16.
- 16)** It is as we pray in tongues that we will come to "the mind of Christ." 1Cor 2v16.

17) Continued use of tongues will result at the end of the Great Tribulation in God the Father sending the Lord Jesus to come to earth to deal with the wicked, take His people home and set up the Millennium Kingdom. Matt 24v22, 2Thess 1v6-10, Rev 11v15-19, 19v11-21.

18) It will also result in the Lord Jesus taking the book out of the Father's hand, continued praying in tongues results in Christ opening the first 3 seals. Further praying results in the casting of Satan and his evil angels out of the heavenlies by Michael and his angels into the earth and God's restraint being removed from Satan, so that the mystery of iniquity (lawlessness) works fully with the start of the Great Tribulation (and the opening of the next 3 seals), and the blowing of the seven trumpets for God's judgements upon the wicked for the evil treatment of His children and also God's attempt to bring the wicked to repentance. Dan 12v1, Rom 2v1-4, 2Peter 3v9, Rev chapters 4 & 5, 6v1-17, 8v2-9v21, 11v15-18, 12v7-12.

19) It will also bring revival at the beginning of the last seven years of this age, continued praying sustains it and increases it during the first three and a half years, it then initiates the greatest worldwide revival the world has even experienced, and will sustain and increase this great worldwide revival right up to Christ's Second Coming. Acts 2v16-21,38,39, Rev 7v9,10,14.

20) The following is a prophecy from praying monks in Russia who prayed for the deliverance of Mother Barbara's father and family in 1911 (who subsequently got out of Russia), one of the monks was given a prophecy, part of which stated that "Britain will lose her empire and all her colonies and will come to almost total ruin, but will be saved by praying women." (Taken from Battle For Israel by Lance Lambert, pages 63-64). When the third seal is opened we see another dreadful result of Antichrist's career, a black horse and a pair of balances. This is a period of famine, for the prices for food stated here are famine prices, **£10 for a £1 loaf would convey to us better the prices here mentioned.** Lev 26v24-26, Ezek 4v16, Gen 41v49. A full days wage will only buy a day's ration of wheat for a man, there would only be sufficient food for dependants if barley was bought instead of wheat. **All the income of a family can only buy enough food to keep them alive.** This time of famine could probably be the result of the wars of the previous seal for those countries under the control of Antichrist (or some kind of economic and banking collapse). It appears that there will be an abundance of oil and wine, i.e., the luxuries of the rich, while the necessities of life for the poor will be in very short supply. During this time of famine and hardship, God will undertake for His children, through not only natural means, but supernatural means also, like He did with Israel for forty years in the wilderness (when He kept and provided for a nation of two and a half million for forty years without any help from the surrounding nations). This deliverance will come about by prolonged praying in tongues by the women of the UK. Deut 8v3,4, Neh 9v20,21, Mark 16v15-18, Acts 2v16-21,38,39, 3v19,20, Rev 12v6,14.

21) It will also enable the Christian to overcome the false apostles and prophets both inside and outside the Church, those who turn God's great Grace into an excuse for fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and for personal gain. It will also give the Christian victory over the many false doctrines of demons that will arise during the last seven years of this age. Matt 24v11,23-26, 2Cor 11v13-15, 2Thess 2v9, 1Tim 4v1-5, 2Tim3v1-9, 2Peter 2v1-22, Jude v17-21, Rev 13v13,14.

22) It is also the means by which God will be able to present us faultless before the presence of His Glory with exceeding joy. Jude v20,21,24, Rev 14v1-5.

23) The "old wineskin" is a powerless unscriptural form of religion controlled by men, which the Lord Jesus will bypass during the last seven years of this age. The "new wineskin" is for the new wine (the divine energies of the Holy Spirit), which will be under the control of the Holy Spirit and driven by (small groups of) believers praying in tongues. Luke 5v36-39, Acts 2v16-21,40-47, Rom 8v26-28, 1Cor 12v7-11.

24) 1Kings 17v1 states: "And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." (with James 5v17,18). The supernatural transport, bilocation and prolonged entering into timelessness during the last seven years of this age by Christians, and especially the last three and a half years of this age will result from a constant use of the gift of tongues. 1Kings 18v7,12, Luke 4v30, Acts 8v39,40, Rev 11v4. **ALL** the signs, wonders and miracles happening in the Christian's walk during the last seven years of this age will be due to that believer's diligent use of the wonderful gift of tongues!

25) We will only be able to live in the heavenly places and walk in the Spirit by using the gift of tongues. John 3v13, 17v24, Eph 1v3, Col 3v1-4, Heb 3v1, 4v9.

26) Having put on the whole armour of God, we need to be praying in tongues for all the saints and the ministries of the Church for the preaching of the gospel and the teaching and edification of the saints. Mark 16v15-18, Acts 11v19-26, Eph 6v10-20 (esp. v18,19).

Also having put on the whole armour of God we need to pray in tongues (with hands raised) for all who are in authority, kings, presidents, prime ministers, members of parliament, politicians and so forth. Exodus 17v11-13, 1Tim 2v1-8.

27) Praying in tongues produces the fruit of the Spirit in the Christian. Gal 5v22,23, Jude v20,21.

28) Acts of deliverance of Christians and divine judgement upon the wicked will come from Christians praying in tongues. Rev 12v15,16 with Num 16v23-34.

29) The new authority of judgement and discipline upon the wicked and the powers of darkness during the Great Tribulation, will come out of the gift of tongues being used. 1Cor 14v18, Acts 13v6-12, 1Cor 5v1-5, 1Tim 1v19,20, 2Tim 2v16-18, Rev 11v3-6.

30) All things work together for good as we diligently pray in tongues. Rom 8v26-28.

31) The Lord Jesus will only be pouring out His power and authority upon those individual Christians and small groups of believers who are earnestly seeking Him and using the gift of tongues as demonstrated by the early Church. It is usually the despised of this world that the Lord Jesus uses to minister His power through, and the smaller the group and the bigger the odds the more He delights to use them (the Gideon principle). It was with a small number of disciples that the Lord Jesus used "to turn the world upside down." Judges 6v15, 7v2,7, Matt 18v20, Acts 2v40-47, 17v6, 1Cor 1v26-31, Heb 10v24,25.

32) The Lord Jesus wants to fulfil His plans and purposes through His Church, He is not going to bless the plans and purposes of men! The Church needs to get back to the pattern laid down by the Lord Jesus through the early Church in government, prayer (especially utilizing the gift of tongues), informal fellowship meetings and ministries, even as Moses was obedient and made all things for the Tabernacle according to the pattern shown to him by God. Matt 6v10, 2Tim 3v16, Heb 8v5.

33) Today, the Lord Jesus is firmly shut out of many Christians lives and Churches, those whom He shed His Blood to redeem, He still patiently stands at the door and knocks, longing for the door to be opened and for meaningful communion. Rev 3v20. He desires to reveal divine truth (especially regarding the last days) to those whom He communes with (and diligently uses the gift of tongues) as they study the Scriptures. Acts 6v2,4, 1Cor 2v7,9,10,12, 14v2,4.

34) Another result of the last great revival upon earth (before the Lord's Second Coming), which begins around the same time as the start of Daniel's 70th prophetic week, will be that because of mighty signs, wonders and miracles being done, people will not only get born again, but also led into the baptism of the Holy Spirit (with the evidence of speaking in tongues), even as the believers in the early Church were. The new converts will also be taught the importance of a diligent use of the gift of tongues, which is the gateway to the other eight gifts of the Spirit and also which will produce the fruit of the Spirit in them. Dan 9v27, Acts 2v16-21,38,39, Rom 12v1,2, 1Cor 2v1-5, 12v7-11, 14v4, 2Cor 3v16-18, Gal 5v16-26, Jude v20,21.

35) Another result of the use of the gift of tongues is that we will be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. Eph 5v18.

36) Praying in tongues helps to form the character of the Lord Jesus in us. Rom 12v1,2, 2Cor 3v16-18.

37) Diligent use of the gift of tongues prepares the believer for ministry, for it is God the Holy Spirit praying into and for all those areas in our lives that need God's attention and grace. Rom 8v26-28, 1Cor 14v4, Jude v20,21.

38) Diligent use of the gift of tongues will produce and sustain a ministry on the highest and most powerful apostolic and prophetic ministry level, even as it did the Lord Jesus, Paul, Peter and so forth. John 3v34, Acts 5v1-16, 1Cor 14v18, 2Cor 12v11,12.

39) The gift of tongues, although it accompanies (and is the evidence) of the baptism in the Holy Spirit throughout the whole of the age of Grace, was especially given to the Church by God to deal with the great evil and darkness that will be upon earth during the Great Tribulation. Matt 24v12,13,21,22, Eph 6v10-13,18, Jude v20,21.

40) Praying in tongues (diligently) will make us kings and priests unto God (through the intercessions of our Great High Priest, so that we rule upon the earth during the Millennium and the ages of ages), thus fulfilling the "mystery of God" at the seventh Trumpet. Rom 19-30, 1Cor 14v18, 2Tim 4v8, Heb 7v25, Jude v20,21,24, Rev 5v8-10, 10v7, 11v15-18, 14v1-5, 21v7, 22v5.

Appendix VIII: God's Answers For The Last Days

1) Charismatic Gifts: There will be an emphasis upon deliverance and use of spiritual gifts (ie. gifts of deliverance, healing and mercy). The critical thing of the last days will be the ministry of prayer exercised by women. The following is a prophecy from praying monks in Russia who prayed for the deliverance of Mother Barbara's father and family in 1911 (who subsequently got out of Russia), one of the monks was given a prophecy, part of which stated that "Britain...will be saved by praying women." (taken from Battle For Israel by Lance Lambert, pages 63-64).

Women have more time around the home or can in the home pray more easily, they are the answer and God's primary critical answer to the difficulties of the last days, in praying things through on the Church. It is necessary to get the women to pray and say, "God, take us through the stages of your empowerment for the last days, take us through those levels.

2) Charismatic Gifts Extended In discipline And Judgement: At this present time we operate in mercy, but when Satan is thrown out of the Heavens (Dan 12v1, Rev 12v7-17) and the wicked and the vast armies of Antichrist and his allies link up with Satan, there has got to be the extension in the Church of the gifts of the Spirit in discipline and judgement. God will not leave us, the Church, to face the wicked with no teeth, **HE WILL NOT LEAVE US DEFENSELESS!** The Two Witnesses for three and a half years **CANNOT** be killed, These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire and call fire down from Heaven. Dan 11v32, Rev 11v3-6. For the whole of three and a half years **ALL** the might of Antichrist and his armies **CANNOT** kill them.

WOMEN: GET PRAYING TO RAISE UP LAST DAY ELIJAH MINISTRIES IN THE CHURCH!

3) Charismatic Gifts Extended To A New Level Of Continuous Use: Not just the manifestation of one gift here and one there, **BUT** Christians living in the Spirit who will experience continuous revelation **ALL** day, especially in those parts of the world (like the Middle East) where there is **GREAT EVIL!** An increase in the level of God's answer to the revelation of the activity of the powers of darkness.

4) Spiritual Gifts And Ministeries Extended To The Level Of Transportation And Angelic Ministry (Matt 24v16, Rev 12v6,14): God will take groups and individual Christians and transport them by supernatural transportation (like experienced by Elijah and Philip), plus provision of food and divine protection in safe places. God will be with Christians in the Great Tribulation like He was with Stephen, thus purifying them and making them white. Dan 11v35.

GOD HAS HIS ANSWERS IN THE POWER GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT!

5) God's Personal Acts Of Power And Judgement: The Seven Trumpets And Seven Vials are God's direct judgement upon the wicked again and again, and the wicked **KNOW ITS GOD**, but they don't repent but blaspheme and curse God. These judgements only harden further the wicked, even as it did Pharaoh! They take on the evil nature of the evil spirits that they serve. Rev 8v2-9v21, 11v15-19, chapters 15 & 16.

6) The Final Stage Of Judgement At Christ's Second Coming: The wrath of The Lamb, as He appears in great power and glory, the wicked **DON'T** repent, **BUT** turn and fight him. Psalm 2, Rev 19v19. But before the Second Coming three angels preach the Everlasting Gospel to **ALL** the earth. Rev 14. Antichrist and his armies are consumed by the breath of His mouth. Zech 14, 2Thess 2v1-12.

There is then silence in Heaven for half an hour (7th Seal), as the redeemed and the angels look down upon a completely shattered earth. **THE PLAN OF EVIL HAS BEEN MANIFESTED TO THE FULL**, but this is part of God's Plan, that is that **ALL** have a full manifestation of sin and evil and its end burn't into their (our) being! It is **THIS** that will be the basis of the happiness of Heaven in the Millennium and the Ages of Ages. **We must not only LOVE righteousness BUT HATE EVIL!** Eph 3v9-11, 2Thess 2v1-12, Heb 1v9, Rev 10v7.

Appendix IX: Oil For Our Lamps!

We can gauge the importance of Christ's Second Coming by contrasting the number of times it is mentioned in the Scriptures alongside other teachings:

1) The "new Birth" (conversion) is mentioned 9 times in the New Testament.

2) Baptism is mentioned 20 times

3) Repentance is mentioned 70 times

4) The Second Coming is mentioned 380 times in the New Testament alone!

Matt 25v1-13 states:

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."

The question is: "What does the oil in the lamps represent"?

The "virgins" represent Christians who are waiting for the return of the Bridegroom (Christ), 5 are wise and 5 are foolish, the wise have extra oil the foolish do not. The Bridegroom tarries and they all fall asleep, suddenly at midnight a cry goes up, "The Bridegroom cometh." They all awake, the foolish find that their lamps have gone out, but the wise are prepared. The foolish try to get the necessary oil, but it is too late, there just isn't time!

This is what the oil is NOT:

It is not grace, for we receive grace for the day.

It is not holiness, for all were virgins, all were pure.

It is not prayerfulness and watchfulness every moment, for all (including the wise) fell asleep.

It is not constantly being filled with the Spirit, for the oil was something they (the wise) acquired before they fell asleep.

It is not the Baptism in the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit, for these don't need to be "stored", they can be received anytime and many will receive these things when they are converted during the Great Tribulation. You only get Baptised in the Spirit once, thereafter you keep getting refilled. There are a lot of Christians who get Baptised in the Spirit who are not ready for the Great Tribulation. The gifts of the Spirit do not constitute extra oil, for once a gift has been given it is always there; and there are many with the gifts of the Spirit who are scared to death to even think about the Great Tribulation.

What difference is there between the wise and foolish virgins? All were pure and ready to meet the Bridegroom. All were waiting for the Bridegroom to return. The wise were not more watchful and prayerful than the foolish for all fell asleep. The **ONLY** difference was the wise took extra oil. What for? **For THE DARKNESS!** They wanted to be sure they had light for the darkness! The foolish didn't bother about the darkness. They didn't need lamps to meet the Bridegroom, they needed the lamps for the darkness that they knew they **WOULD HAVE TO** pass through **BEFORE** they met the Bridegroom!

The oil in the lamps then represents the correct interpretation of end-time prophetic truth! 2Peter 1v19 states:

"And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts."

In Matt 24v3 the disciples had asked the Lord Jesus the following question:

"...Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

So in response the Lord Jesus had given them the end-time signs to look out for, i.e. end-time prophetic truth. He refers them to Daniel's 70th prophetic week in Daniel 9v27 (with Dan 11v31, 12v11) and the Great Tribulation which immediately precedes His return. The 70th week of Daniel, the time of the 7 year treaty between Antichrist, Israel and many other countries, will be the darkest time in the world's history, midnight representing the start of the Great Tribulation when Antichrist breaks the covenant with Israel and sets up his image in the Temple. 2Thess 2v1-12, Rev 13 (all) Hence the cry goes up, "The Bridegroom cometh." Notice, it doesn't say "The Bridegroom's here," **BUT** that He cometh, i.e. He is on His way. He comes **AFTER** midnight, after the Great Tribulation. Matt 24v29-31. In the parable He comes after midnight when the foolish have gone to try and buy oil (the point being that once

midnight comes there won't be time to prepare!)

Why does the lamp of the foolish go out at midnight? Because they did not believe they would see darkness – as far as the Church is concerned the last three and a half years and the reign of Antichrist, they thought the Bridegroom would have come before then. Hence the foolish only take notice of prophecy up to the commencement of the middle of Daniel's 70th week. Once the last three and a half years of this age starts (the Great Tribulation), they have no more prophetic light and their lamps go out. The fact that half of them were foolish shows that half of the Church will find itself in this position!

Why did the wise fall asleep? Well, there are many who have learned, or are learning, about the reign of Antichrist and the Great Tribulation, they believe they have to face the darkness before meeting the Lord. They have learnt the Scriptures and stored the oil of prophetic truth. At first they were very intense and keen about the subject looking for the time of the treaty (and so forth), but as time has passed their interest and zeal has cooled and they have fallen asleep, "the Lord tarries", nevertheless, when the time comes they will awake and they will have the **ALL IMPORTANT** oil!"

Matt 25v1-13 is simply carrying on from Matt 24, especially from the parable of the faithful and wise servant and the evil servant in Matt 24v45-51:

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

So, these servants represent Pastors and Teachers who are to teach the Body of Christ Truth (including end-time prophetic truth), however, the evil servant not only believes the lie of a secret pre-tribulation advent and rapture, **BUT** has also taught it to those Christians in his church as well, i.e. the foolish virgins, with the result that **BOTH** the evil servant and the foolish virgins backslide and go into apostasy. Matt 24v51, 25v12

Psalms 119v105: **"Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path."**

These 2 parables in Matt 24v45-25v13 are teaching the Body of Christ just how important the correct interpretation of last day prophetic truth is, it does **NOT** teach that that is all you need to get through the dark days of the Great Tribulation! In the parable of the 10 virgins the Lord was illustrating how vital it is to have light for the darkness – **THE LIGHT HE (the Lord Jesus) HAS PROVIDED!** You can have everything else like the foolish virgins, purity, grace, looking for the coming of the Lord and so forth and yet backslide and go into apostasy in the time of darkness, during the Great Tribulation.

Let me give you an example of just how important the correct interpretation of prophecy is:

I want you to think of a Christian with a tremendous ministry, someone who has a healing ministry in which he sees blind, deaf, dumb, lame, paralysed, even the leprous and cancerous healed. Someone who has seen the power of God through them alter the forces of nature, who has seen miraculous provision of finance and food, experienced supernatural transport from one place to another. Someone with a ministry where they have seen the dead raised to life again. Someone who has seen Jesus face to face, not once but many, many times. Someone who has even had the Lord Himself give them studies in the Scriptures. Imagine someone who sees demons cast out in his/her ministry. Someone who has seen thousands upon thousands of people come to Christ.

Now let me ask you this question: How many of you believe that such a person would be prepared for any trouble or tribulation that came along? I suppose that very many people would be of the opinion that they definitely would be. However, the people who think that are **VERY** wrong!

The people I had in mind when outlining the above great ministry is the Apostles. Matt 10v1,8:

"And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease...Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."

They saw miraculous provision of finances, food, clothes (Matt 10v9,10), the fish with the coin (Matt 17v27), the miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5v4-7), Peter walked upon the water with the Lord (Matt 14v28-31), the disciples in a boat with the Lord were all transported with the boat to land (John 6v21), they saw the power of the Holy Spirit in

preaching (Matt 10v20), the momentous ministry of Jesus, His miracles, raising the dead, casting out demons, stilling the storm, feeding the multitudes with a few loaves and fishes, thousands upon thousands turning to Christ, His tremendous preaching and wisdom, He gave them studies in the Scriptures (Luke 18v31, Mark 8v31 and so forth), they were in His presence not for a few days, **BUT** for over 3 years. Peter, James and John were taken up the mountain where they saw Him transfigured (and so saw His pre-incarnate Glory) and heard the voice of the Father.

Yet in spite of all this, when Jesus was taken prisoner, **WHEN THE HOUR OF DARKNESS CAME**, even though they **ALL** said they were ready to follow Him into prison and to death (Luke 22v33, Matt 26v33-35..) when the time came they **ALL** forsook Him, and fled and were in unbelief, defeat and despair. (Matt 26v56) Luke 24v21 states: "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel..." Now they even doubted that He was the Redeemer! After His Resurrection the Lord reminded them through the women of what He has previously had told them about His suffering and death but they would not believe! Luke 24v11: "And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not."

What was the cause of their defeat, unbelief, despair and forsaking the Lord? Why did they fail in the hour of darkness? They had great ministry, power, experience, why did they collapse?

THEY FAILED BECAUSE THEY IGNORED BIBLICAL PROPHECY, THEY DELIBERATELY SHUT THEIR EARS TO THE PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE LORD'S SUFFERING AND DEATH!

Luke 24v25: "Then he said unto them, **O fools, and slow of heart to believe ALL that the prophets have spoken:**"

The disciples only listened to the prophecies they liked, i.e. John 1v45: "...We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." They recognised Him as the Messiah of whom the prophets wrote, **BUT** they ignored other things the prophets wrote regarding His suffering and death (Isaiah 53, Psalm 22 and so forth), even though the Lord Jesus pointed out these things many, many times to them! Matt 16v21-23, 17v9, 20v17-19, 26v1,2, Luke 9v43-45, 17v25 and so on..

Luke 24v25-27: "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? **And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.**"

They refused to accept the Truth of a suffering Messiah, because they had received and believed the false man made traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, which taught of a Messiah coming in great power and glory, Who would throw the Roman yoke from off Israel and restore the kingdom to them.

They missed the first Coming of Christ completely and only saw the Second! Matt 15v1-20, 16v6, Mark 8v15, 1Peter 1v18

John 16v12: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

Indeed, so ingrained in their minds and spirits were these unscriptural man made traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, that even after the 40 days of post resurrection ministry to them by the Lord Jesus, they still retained the old lies of the Scribes and Pharisees on this. Acts 1v6 states: "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, **Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?**"

HOW BINDING ARE UNSCRIPTURAL MAN MADE TRADITIONS!

In Matt 24v3, the disciples ask the Lord Jesus this question:

"Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

So, the first thing to watch out for is when he (the Prince who is to come) makes a covenant (peace treaty) with many nations, including Israel (for one week), which is the start of Daniel's 70th week, i.e. the last 7 years of this age. Three and a half years later, Antichrist breaks the treaty with Israel and sets up his image in the Temple in Jerusalem claiming that he is God, Christ comes at the end of this second three and a half year period (known as the Great Tribulation), i.e. "...immediately after the tribulation of those days..." Matt 24v15-21, 29-31 (with Dan 9v27, 11v31, 12v11) to destroy the wicked and to take His people home. 2Thess 2v1-12, Rev 11v15-18. NOTE: Luke 17v20-18v8, esp. Luke 17v26-30:

"And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; **but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom** it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. **Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed."**

The day that Christ comes to take His people home and destroy the wicked is the SAME day, NOT separated by three and a half years!

Appendix X: Concerning The Promised Return Of The Lord Jesus (By W F P Burton)

Mr Burton writes: I cannot even remember the time when I was ignorant of the promise of the Lord Jesus to return again and take the saints to Himself. As soon as I learned to spell, I could decipher on our sitting room wall the text, "Surely I come quickly," Rev 22v20, and underneath, in red letters, "Perhaps today."

I was saved at nineteen years of age, and very literally, for over sixty years, my whole life has been, and still is, one great yearning longing for His return. Such passages as, "To those who look for Him shall He appear..." Heb 9v28. "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." Matt 24v44. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Titus 2v13. Such passages, I say, and many others of a similar nature, were construed as meaning that I must be in a constant attitude of expectancy. Hundreds and thousands of times, by day and by night, I have looked up and thought that those fleecy coverings of the sky might burst asunder and reveal my beloved Lord, the Bridegroom of the Church, coming for His bride.

Of course, I know all about the sceptic's jibe, that "up" in Great Britain would be "down" in New Zealand. I know, too, that there are billions of clouds over the earth. Nevertheless, "Behold He cometh with clouds and every eye shall see Him." Rev 1v7. At least ten times in Scripture His return is associated with clouds. Since He has promised to take the dead in Christ and the living in Christ, I shall be caught up, for I am in Christ. 1Thess 4v16,17. "We shall all be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye." 1Cor 15v51,52.

Some have imagined a secret coming, when the unsaved will suddenly find their Christian associates and relatives missing. They have imagined, for example, the Christian engine driver caught up and his train hurtling on driverless to destruction. I could not agree to that, since the shout and the trumpet blast must be heard by all alike. 1Thess 4v16. It will be with blazing splendour, like the lightning, or day-dawn. Matt 24v27, 16v27. True, His coming is likened seven times to that of a thief, but that must be in its unexpectancy; hardly in its secrecy. It will not be silently, but with a mighty shout. "Every eye shall see Him." Rev 1v7.

I have given years of intensive study to dispensational truth. Some Christians dismiss prophetic teaching as something incomprehensible, or at least as a hobby for a few visionary cranks. Early in my Christian experience, however, I saw that the young Thessalonian believers were not ignorant of the times and seasons, so I must be ignorant either. 1Thess 5v1,2. For example, concerning "the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet," the Lord Jesus said, Matt 24v15, "Whoso readeth let him understand." I determined to understand and have frequently given whole days to ferreting out these precious truths, reading through the whole Bible repeatedly in over twenty different versions, in four different languages, marking and tabulating with concordances and lexicons at my elbow, lest I should miss some truth. Of late I have devoted from twelve midnight till two or three in the morning to Bible study, when the world is quiet and there are no interruptions.

In my early Christian experience, I was taught to believe that first Christ would come **FOR** His saints, into the clouds, and that after an indeterminate period, covering at least part of that unparalleled tribulation which is to precede Christ's return, He would descend **WITH** His saints to earth.

It is evident that the last days of this dispensation are to be the darkest. "In the latter times some shall depart from the faith." 1Tim 4v1-3. "In the last days perilous times shall come...." 2Tim 3v1-5. "That day shall not come except there come a falling away first." 2Thess 2v1-4. "In the latter time of their kingdom, when transgressors are come to the full..." Dan 8v23-25. "At that time there shall be a time of trouble such as never was..." Dan 12v1,2. "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be." Matt 24v21. "At midnight... Behold the bridegroom cometh." Matt 25v6.

As I have ministered God's Word in assemblies large and small, white and black, for over sixty years, I have desired to be most careful that I was in line with the Truth. I have consulted the standard works on dispensational truth by Seiss, Trotter, Savage, Anderson, Pember, S. D. Gordon, Tregelles, McConkey, Samuel Wilkerson, David Baron, and many others less well known. These books I have not only read, but also studied deeply, making marginal notes, etc. In order to facilitate my study, I have devised a series of marks in one of my Bibles: a yellow arrow **UP**

indicates verses dealing with Christ's coming in the clouds and our rapture to Him, and a yellow arrow **DOWN** beside verses which speak of His return to earth with His saints. Here, however, I found myself in some quandary, for certain passages obviously refer to both. For instance:

1) When Christ rose from the Mount of Olives and disappeared in the clouds, the two messengers in white declared that, "He shall come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven. Acts 1v11 with Luke 24v50,51. Bethany is on the Eastern slope of the Mount of Olives and when the Lord returns to deliver Jerusalem "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives.... and all the saints with Thee." Zech 14v4,5. That obviously calls for a yellow arrow **DOWN**, yet the spectators of His ascension were believers, and if He is to return for believers, that should be indicated by a yellow arrow **UP**. The messengers in white spoke of no intermediate coming for His saints, nor of a subsequent coming to the earth. It was just **ONE** coming for His saints to the Mount of Olives.

2) I have used Acts 15v14-18 as a clear passage, showing God's programme in the administration of His authority in this world. The passage shows four definite steps: first Israel; then the Gentiles; after that Israel again; and, finally, a universal worldwide sway. "I will build again the tabernacle of David," points back to God's dealings in the past and forward to His taking up Israel again. In between is the Gentile dispensation, the Church, in which we find ourselves today. God is taking out of the Gentiles a people for His Name. The next step is to be ushered in by the return of the Lord, for He says, "I will return and rebuild...." How can one point the arrow in that case? **UP** for the consummation of the Gentile age, yet **DOWN** for the time when Christ will return to reign as Israel's king. It is just one coming.

3) A similar passage is in 2Thess 1v7,8. Our rest will be when Christ comes for us, but Paul places it **WHEN** the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels. In flaming fire taking vengeance..." That is certainly at His coming to earth. Was Paul right in placing the saints rest at the time when Christ comes to earth? Of course the God-inspired epistle to the Thessalonians is without fault, even though it may not fit in with our theories. But this passage continues further in the same strain, for in 2Thess 1v9 and 10, Paul speaks of the punishment of the wicked with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power, "**WHEN** He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe....in that day." **In other words His coming to punish the wicked and to be glorified in the saints IS THE SAME COMING.**

4) That brilliant and devout scholar S.P. Tregelles draws our attention to 1Cor 15v51-54, where the resurrection and translation of the saints is associated with a particular passage in Isaiah, "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." Isaiah 27v7 and 8 shows it to be the time when the Lord shall reign in Mount Zion, **so there cannot be any lapse of time between His coming for the saints and His coming to reign. Rev 11v15-18, 22v12.**

For many years, though teaching in all its fullness the second coming of the Lord, I have hesitated to speak of the **TIME** of His coming. I have answered questions as to when He will come by Luke 21v27-31, the nations moving toward their final condition, as indicated in Daniel and Revelation, "when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." Or I have shown enquirers Mark 13v13v32, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man."

In order to support the teaching of two distinct comings, it is necessary to add "Of course, that is not His coming for His saints but His coming with them." But was it? These were the same disciples who were the foundation members of His Church and in Mark 13v37. Christ says, "And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

Again, "For the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." Matt 24v22. One had to add, "Of course, this does not refer to the Church, for she will have been taken up to heaven before that. This must refer to the tribulation saints." **But Jesus did not say that. He simply said, "The elect," and we are all part of that elect.**

In dealing with Matt 24v14, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness to all nations: and then shall the end come;" it was added (by those who believe in the pre-tribulation rapture of the Church), "Of course, that is quite different from the gospel of God's grace." But is it? Jesus said, "**THIS GOSPEL.**" Paul said, "Though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let Him be accursed." Gal 1v8. Right up to the last sight we have of Paul, in the last verse of "The Acts of the Apostles," He was still expounding and testifying the kingdom of God. The Gospel of the kingdom is just the same sweet old Gospel by which we are saved and Jesus is our king too, "The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of Lords." 1Tim 6v15.

To return to my own experience, I had to make a solid determination that at all costs, I would read no more into the Scriptures than was written. To add or detract would bring very serious results. Rev 22v18 and 19. Let me be sincere at all costs. His coming should be His coming: just that and no more. The elect should be the elect, and not this or that elect unless Jesus said so.

Considerable light came to me in looking up in Moulton and Milligan's Greek Lexicon the word "**apantesin**," "to meet," used in 1Thess 4v17, "caught up to meet the Lord in the air." **It is an exact word implying an official welcome to a newly arrived dignitary. It is used in Acts 28v15, where "the brethren came to meet us." The Christians went out of Rome to meet Paul and to conduct Him into their city. Just so we shall be caught up to give the Lord Jesus an official welcome and to return with Him to the Mount of Olives.**

In Rev 20v4 and 5, those who refuse the worship and mark of the Beast, the man of sin, are included in the first resurrection, so they cannot partake in that resurrection before the man of sin has appeared. **Moreover, since it is the FIRST resurrection, there can have been no other before it. The usual explanation given is that the rapture is "the first part of the first resurrection." Is not that a quibble? Surely it is adding to the Word of God, and making it of none effect. Note that in 2Thess 2v8, the man of sin, the Anti-Christ, is to be destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming ("epiphaneia tees parousias autou"), so that Christ's coming cannot occur before "that Wicked" has run his three year course. Rev 13v5.**

Another passage which teaches that there will be one coming and not two is Matt 13v24-30,37-43. v38. "The good seed are the children of the kingdom." The bad seed "are the children of the Wicked One." v30. "Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."... v41. "The Son of man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend."... v43. "Then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of their Father." Note particularly, "both grow together until the harvest," and the tares are dealt with FIRST.

The second chapter of Second Thessalonians was for some time a puzzle to me. However, I note that nearly all the translations put for "huper," "as touching, concerning," and the whole passage becomes plain. **"CONCERNING THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AND OUR GATHERING TOGETHER UNTO HIM....THAT DAY SHALL NOT COME, EXCEPT THERE COME A FALLING AWAY FIRST, AND THE MAN OF SIN BE REVEALED." The rapture of the saints cannot occur before the great apostasy and the revelation of the Man of Sin: the beast whose picture is seen in Rev 13 and 2Thess 2v1-10.**

The Lord Jesus said that He would go away and come again. He told them that they should not see Him till they could say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Matt 23v39. No sort of discrimination: just that He would return. So the disciples asked, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the age?" Matt 24v3. In reply He told them of the intervening tribulation and of the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet. Then in Matt 24v29,30, He continued, **"IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE TRIBULATION OF THOSE DAYS shall the sun be darkened....and THEN shall appear the sign of the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven: and THEN shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." When shall He come? "IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE TRIBULATION OF THOSE DAYS." It is THEN that the seventh and last trumpet will sound. 1Cor 15v52, Rev 11v15-19, Matt 24v31, 1Thess 4v16; when He will pour wrath upon the godless and give rewards to the saints. Rev 22v12.**

One of the surest ways of exposing an error is to note the weakness of the arguments advanced in its favour. The two texts so often used to prove the pre-tribulation rapture are Dan 12v1 and 1Thess 5v9. In Dan 12v1, after speaking of a time of unparalleled tribulation, Daniel says, "At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Now thank God we are among His people, and we are written in the book, so at that time we shall be delivered, but note that it does not say before the tribulation, or in the tribulation, or after the tribulation. Thus it is no proof either the one way or the other.

Of 1Thess 5v9, "God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." We all know that for us the wrath is passed and that when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, it is to take vengeance on those who know not God and who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2Thess 1v8. Thus we have no fear as to that day of wrath, but **the passage says nothing about being delivered from tribulation.** How about the millions that have been put to awful deaths in China, Russia, Congo and Korea, for no other sin than that they were Christians. Thus neither text can be taken to prove that the saints will not go through the tribulation, and the weakness of the pre-tribulation teaching is evidenced in its having to quote such texts to support it.

The question arises: How can intervening events, before the return of the Lord, affect our looking for Him, waiting for Him, being ready for His coming? How can we live in eager anticipation if we know that the awful tribulation must come first? It is moving to notice in the last few chapters of John, Christ's eager looking forward to His return to the Father. There are fourteen mentions of His going away, going to the Father, etc. Even though the Lord Jesus knew that Calvary lay between, yet it did not dim His hope of seeing His Father again. Indeed, it was the joy that

was set before Him which sustained Him in those awful hours of enduring the cross, descent into Hades and shame. Acts 2v27, Heb 12v2.

A woman, as she draws near to the time when she will take her newborn babe in her arms, naturally dreads the ordeal of the birth pangs, but that does not hinder her eagerness to welcome her little one. Similarly, though every one of us would prefer to think that we would escape the coming tribulation, yet in spite of it, we look forward to the glories that lie beyond. **Indeed, it is that blessed hope of His coming, which will sustain the saints in their hour of greatest trial.**

This is not a question of what we would like, but of what the Bible teaches. One naturally inclines to the attractive idea that the Church will escape the great tribulation, but by all means let us be loyal to THE WORD OF GOD. There is no Scripture to say that the Holy Spirit, or the Church is to be removed before the Great tribulation. The restrainer of 2Thess 2v7 is God, but it is **ONLY** God's restraint that is removed from the Devil and the powers of darkness, **NOT** God's Presence from the earth (for Acts 2v15-21 clearly teaches that God the Holy Spirit is working upon earth right up until the Christ's 2nd Coming)! The result of the removal of this restraint by God is that the "mystery of iniquity" works fully with the man of sin (Antichrist) being revealed (who sits in the Temple in Jerusalem claiming that he is God) and the ensuing of the Great Tribulation. Dan 12v1, Matt 24v15-21, 2Thess 2v3,4,8,9, Rev 7v14, 13 (all)

If the Spirit and the Church are to be removed from the earth dominated by Satan, how can the world have its greatest revival, with converts that no man can number? Rev 7v14. The saints will continue to be massacred till the end, Rev 6v11, but they are promised preservation through and out of tribulation. Psalm 121v6, Isaiah 26v20, Jer 39v17,18, Zeph 2v3, Dan 12v1, Luke 21v36, John 17v15, 2Pet 2v9, Rev 3v10, (Exodus 9v6,8,26, 10v23)

It is amazing to note how persistently false teachers echo the error that the Church will be removed, and the Holy Spirit taken away, before that last great tribulation. One would almost think that by their constant reiteration they could make wrong right, and all because of 2Thess 2v7 where the Holy Spirit is not even mentioned. They tell us that Matthew 24 is "Jewish," yet it is spoken to some of the same disciples as John chapters 14 to 16. Are they also "Jewish?" These were the foundation members of the Christian Church.

Was ever so important a doctrine as the return of the Lord Jesus mishandled so sadly, without any solid foundation whatever. They virtually declare, "I have made up my mind, so please don't confuse me with facts." Brethren, may I plead for a sane return to the Word of God, and let us not read into it more than is written there.

WHEN WILL CHRIST COME? IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE TRIBULATION. Matt 24v29,30.

Appendix XI: Words of encouragement from the Lord Jesus for the Church

1) Paul states in 1Cor 14v15: "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." In his teaching to the Corinthian Church, he gives them direction on a balanced prayer, praise and worship life in their Christian walk.

The Lord Jesus said to me very recently that today there is much "praying with the understanding" (praying with the mind), but little "praying with the spirit" (praying in tongues), and that this is one off the main reasons for a powerless Church.

He then went on to say that if we use the gift of tongues diligently (like the early Church did, 1Cor 14v2,4,18, Jude v20,21) we would see mighty signs, wonders and miracles happen when the last great outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh occurs (Joel 2v28-32 with Acts 2v16-21), thus fulfilling John 14v12-14.

He then went on to say that any Church or Christian who neglects to use it diligently, will see little or nothing happen and will be living in defeat.

2) Acts 2v16-21:

The Lord Jesus showed me the following regarding the coming revival: He showed me a person rolling a snowball up a mountain, as they got further up to the top it became harder to roll the snowball because as it rolled up the slope it gathered more snow on it, thus getting heavier and requiring more effort to get it to the top. However, once the snowball had reached the top and it was pushed down the other side, it didn't just roll down the mountain and continue to get bigger as it went down the slope, but it triggered a massive avalanche that covered the whole side of the mountain.

What the Lord Jesus is saying is that we need to continue to pray diligently in tongues, and even when it gets harder to pray because of attacks from Satan and the power of darkness, it is essential to pray through until we get the answer and the Lord Jesus pours out of His Spirit upon all flesh, thus fulfilling Joel's wonderful prophecy. Joel 2v28-32, Acts 2v16-21,39, Eph 6v10-20.

Alister Hamilton, 6th June 2019.

The Lord Jesus gave me two words for the Church, please do first take the following injunction from Paul to heart:

1Thess 5v20,21: "Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good."

I asked the Lord Jesus the main reason for lack of revival in the Church, the following was what He spoke to me:

- 1) Prayerlessness. (A complete absence of Psalm 24v3-6)
- 2) The prayerless church and Christian God will simply bypass in the coming revival.
- 3) We need to thirst for Him as the disciples did in the Upper Room before the Day of Pentecost. Acts 1v14.

Isaiah 44v3 states: "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring."

With Psalm 42v2, 63v1, 143v6, John 7v37-39.

4) He has given us the tools to finish the job (of bringing revival into the Church)...the gift of tongues. Rom 8v26-28, 1Cor 14v2,4,15,18, Jude v20,21.

The Lord Jesus showed me a large group of lemmings running headlong towards a cliff top oblivious to the certain death that lay ahead of them, He then said that this was the condition of the Church today. Many Christians are running headlong to certain spiritual destruction during the Great Tribulation due to the refusal to listen to or take note to what the Holy Spirit is saying, or the last day signs in world events or what the prophetic Scriptures say, to seek His Face in a new and living way (like the disciples did in the Upper Room, Acts 1v14) for the promised latter rains and preparation for a last day ministry and survival during the Great Tribulation. Matt 24v12,21,24, Luke 6v46-49, 21v11, Acts 2v16-21,39.

He then showed me that the great pain and sorrow that the Trinity is now experiencing over this terrible state of affairs is the same as the Trinity felt (in 30 AD) over the looming destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Luke 19v41-44.

GET MY PEOPLE READY!

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches!

Alister Hamilton, March 2020.

Prophecy For The Church & FGB

Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good.

1Thess 5v20,21

The condition of the FGB: 2Tim 3v5, Rev Rev 3v1, (2v5, 3v16, past tense, not future tense, the action is already complete)

The FGB has become like the denominational churches, this includes the Pentecostal churches (Elim, AOG, Apostolic et al)...

"The glory has departed (from it)" it is now called "ICHABOD" 1Sam 4v21

This condition has come about because they (the members (and those associated with it)) have long since stopped praying diligently in tongues!

BUT God can and will turn "ICHABOD" into an "EBENEZER"! ("The Stone of Help," "Thus far Yahweh has helped us," the place of victory and revival). 1Sam 7v12

IF we diligently pray in tongues and seek His Face, as the early NT Church did! Psalm 24v3-6, Acts 1v14, 2v42, 9v11, 1Cor 14v18, James 4v5-8, Jude v20,21

However, this will **NOT** be through the FGB structure, but through the structure of the New Testament informal fellowship meeting ("the church that is in their house"). 1Cor 11v1-14v40, 16v19, Jude v12

Then the Lord will fulfill His ministry as He so desires with the coming revival. Luke 4v18,19 with Isaiah 61v1,2, Acts 2v17-21,38,39, 3v19,20

"He/she who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Alister Hamilton.

2nd September 2022.

NOTE:

This and other studies can be found at:

www.truthforthealastdays.com

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